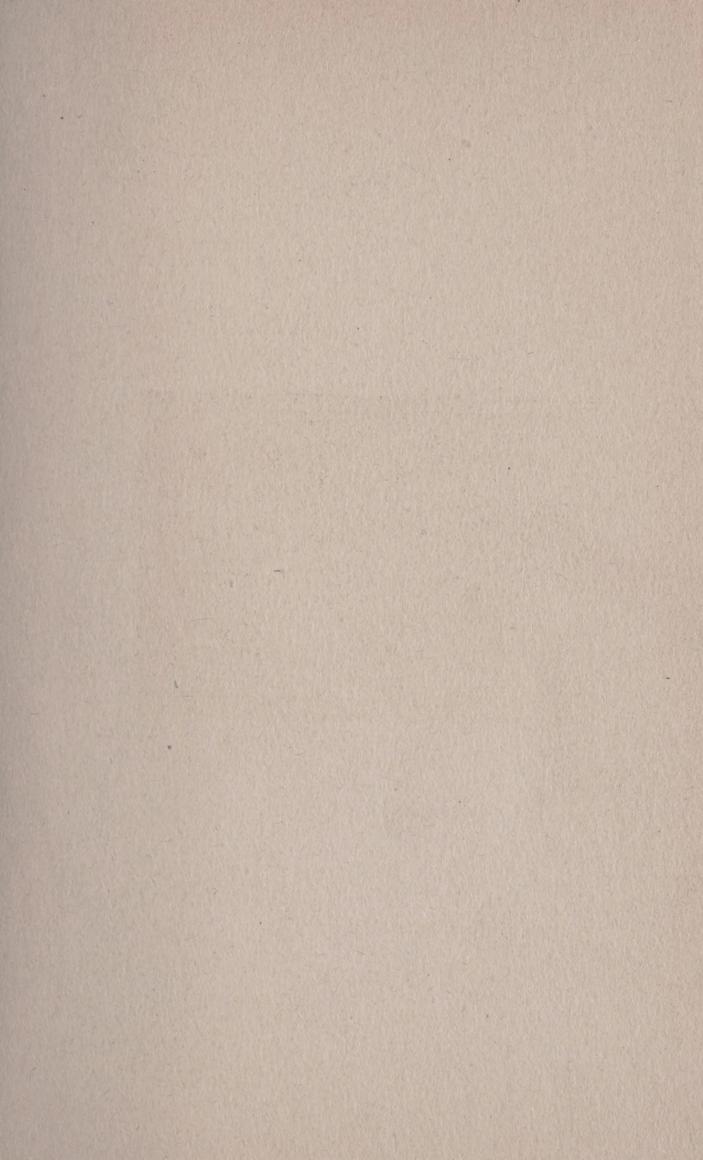


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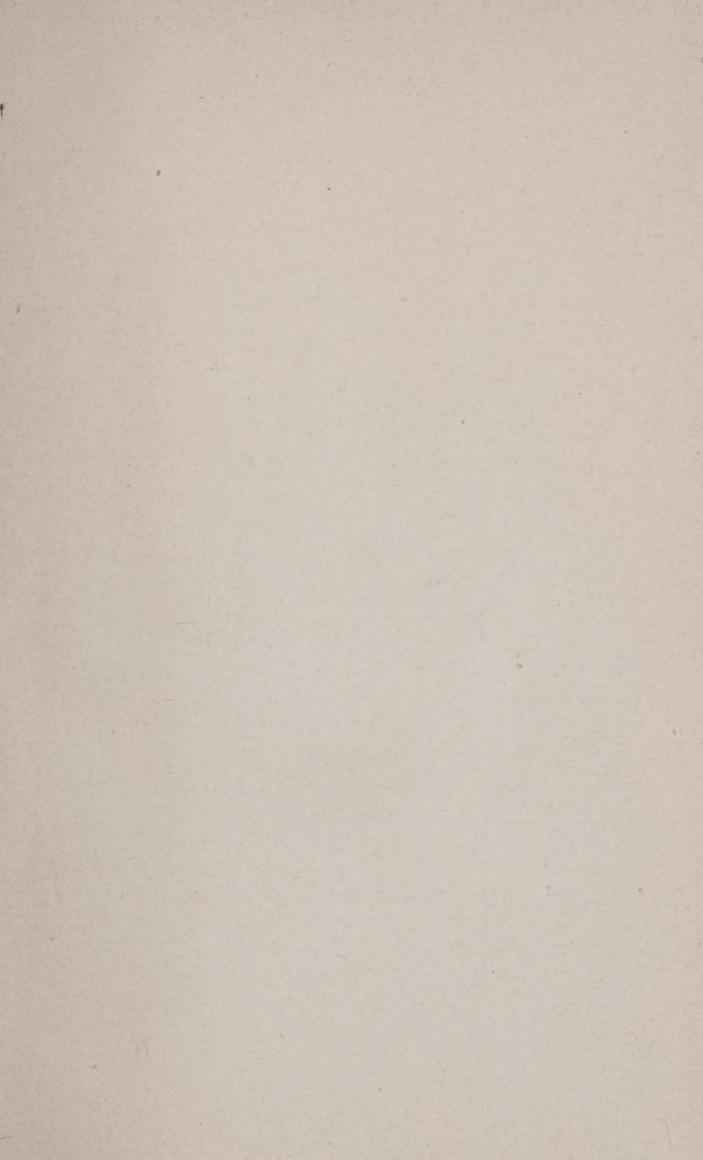
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"THE COLONEL PLACED THE LITTLE FELLOW IN HIS MOTHER'S OUTSTRETCHED ARMS." (See page 150.)

A HOSTAGE OF WAR.

MARY G. BONESTEEL.

35



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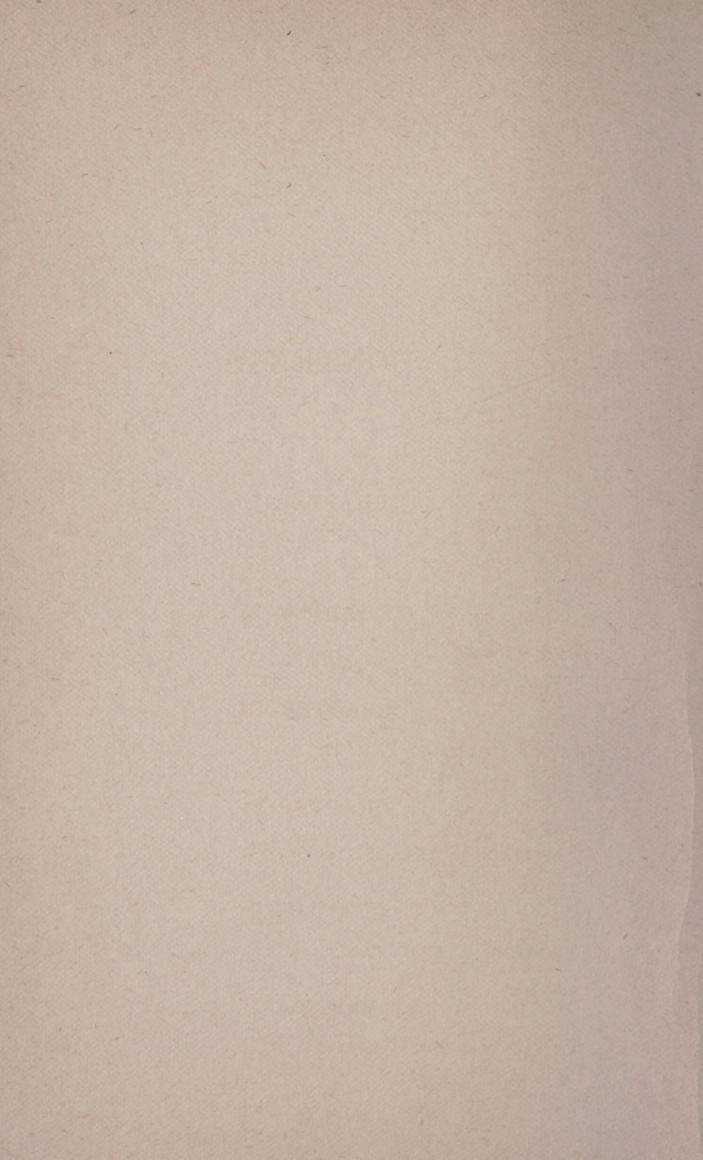
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TO MY FATHER,

General D. B. Greene,

U. S. Army.



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A HOSTAGE OF WAR.

CHAPTER I.

JACK.

JACK was the youngest of the three boys: there were Billy, a dashing young middy on duty with the Pacific Squadron, and Dick, a third-class man at West Point; so it left the little fellow to rule alone over the household in the big old commanding officer's quarters at Fort Fetterman.

Jack ruled his household by means of the sweetest and most insinuating voice, the most coaxing and engaging smile, and, finally, the most tender and loving of little hearts.

His rule began in the kitchen with old Appolyn, the French and Indian half-breed cook who had been in the Colonel's family since he

10 Jack.

served down in Arizona in the '70's as the junior subaltern; it extended to Jerry, the ex-soldier who took care of the horses and made himself generally useful; to Nora, the pretty waitress; and it did not end there. His father and mother were his most loyal subjects, and indeed the only wonder is that the child was not unendurably spoiled; but he was not, being a fine manly little chap of sense, able to swim, row, ride, and even fight with the little Indian lads from the near-by agency; for he had not a single companion of his own age in the post.

But, although the Colonel was a stern disciplinarian, as every "youngster" in the regiment knew, and Mrs. Colonel, too, was a most stately and dignified dame, ruling the feminine contingent with infinite tact yet undisputed authority, Jack never called them anything save Daddy and Dolly—this to the open amusement and delight of every soul in the regiment. For it was so absurd to have the white-haired, grave, and stately Colonel, whose official designation was John Quincy Hollingsworth, addressed as "daddy"; it was almost more absurd in Mrs. Colonel's case, for she had such a grand air, such digni-

fied manners, that she might easily have been a duchess; but to Jack she was just plain Dolly.

It is true that both parents had remonstrated with the young man as to his choice of names; but Jack was very sweet and plausible, and very firm. "Any fellow can say 'papa' or 'pa-pa,' or 'father'—that's easy; but 'daddy' is different—and Dolly does go so with 'ducky' and 'darling' and 'dearest.' I just have to call my mother that."

Horror! Shades of Mrs. Colonel's stately colonial ancestors! what would they have thought of "ducky"?

One lovely June morning the Colonel and Jack stood on the great wide front porch, which was shaded by a beautiful and curious pink-and-white rose which tradition declared had been planted in the fort nearly a century ago by the old French missionaries when the post was a fur-trading station.

"Don't you think it's warm enough fur a swim to-day?" Jack was saying in a wistful little voice; but the emphasis unconsciously placed on the pronoun quite gave the small boy away.

"So mamma does not approve, eh, Jack?

Well, she is right, old man; it is warm enough, as far as that goes, but the water is still far too cold. Remember, Buffalo Creek comes straight down from the mountains, where there is plenty of snow yet."

"Yes, I know," returned Jack eagerly, "and Dick Running Horse he telled me about it. He says the Buffalo gets smaller and smaller, and finally when it runs way up to the foot of the mountains, it goes down in a hole in the rocks, comes out on the other side, where it climbs up and up till it gets to a valley which is so warm that the grass stays green nearly all the year, and there is lots of game and fish there; so the Indians call it Happy Hunting—that's the English; I've forgotten the Sioux name."

Jack could jabber Sioux quite fluently; he even knew the difference between the "How Kola" and "How Koda" tribes.

"I'm afraid Running Horse was 'stuffing' you, young man; he must be as good a romancer as he is a teamster," replied the Colonel, smiling.

"No, but honest, daddy, he says it's true; he was there himself once, when he was a little fellow, and lived in his grandfather's lodge; that was afore he was civilized, you know," explained Jack earnestly.

"Oh! So Running Horse is civilized, is he?" queried the Colonel, with a quizzical twinkle of the eye, as a mental picture presented itself to him of the young half-breed teamster, the most reckless dare-devil and best whip on the reservation, at once the torment and pride of the quartermaster—for there was nothing on four legs that Running Horse couldn't ride or drive; he was absolutely fearless.

"Oh, yes, Running Horse is civilized all right; he carries the bundles and even the pappoose when he and his squaw come in to trade, and that's a sign."

"Yes, that's a sign," agreed his father.

"Well," continued Jack, "he says that right in the middle of that valley are two lakes; one of them is so cold that it almost freezes anything left in it, and the other one so hot that you can cook things in it; and the cold one is so full of trout that when you drink out of it you have to be awful careful not to swallow the fish."

"Did you ever hear Running Horse mention having met, during the civilizing process, with a certain famous chronicler named Baron Münchausen?" asked the Colonel gravely.

"No, daddy, I don't think he ever did; but he knew Buffalo Bill, Captain Jack Crawford, General Crook, and General Miles, and lots of people like that."

"Well, Jack, I feel sure he must also have met the Baron. Hello! here comes the orderly on a run. What can have happened?"

A spick-and-span young soldier with white gloves and side arms was tearing across the parade from the direction of post headquarters. The Colonel and Jack walked down to the gate to meet him.

Gasping and almost breathless between his run and importance, the orderly saluted, then delivered his message:

"The adjutant's compliments, sor, and there is a small party of Sioux coming down the old Indian trail over the big divide."

"Very good, orderly, I'll come right over to the office," replied the Colonel; then he said half to himself: "Well, we haven't had a powwow of any kind for two or three months; these fellows are coming in to beg, most likely." Jack clapped his hands at this, and began to prance excitedly, his disappointment over the forbidden swim quite forgotten in the prospect of a powwow, which was a rare but much-desired event in which Jack always figured quite as conspicuously as his father.

The Colonel's Indian name was "White Fox," as being significant of his thick, snowwhite hair; while Jack was known far and near as Little Fox, or sometimes Coyote. He was a great favorite with all the different bands that came in to the post during the course of the year, sometimes to beg for rations, but more often with complaints against the white settlers who were rapidly taking up claims on the available government lands near the great Sioux reservations, and most often of all to complain of their Indian agents. Heretofore Colonel Hollingsworth, by exercising infinite patience and tact, had been able to settle, satisfactorily to the Indians at least, all difficulties.

The Indians have implicit confidence in the "black-gowns," as they call Catholic priests and army officials. Jack knew all the chiefs and principal warriors by name, and they never forgot him on their occasional visits. He had 16 Jack.

a good-sized collection of all sorts of Indian treasures: moccasins, gorgeously embroidered and beaded buckskin jackets, hunting-shirts, and short little baggy trousers to match were displayed on the walls of his and his father's den, which they shared in common. Pretty baskets, hunting-knives, pipes, and even a murderous-looking tomahawk were in this curious collection; while numerous Navajo blankets, so finely woven that water could be carried in them any distance without spilling a drop, were spread on the polished floor and used as couch-covers and portières.

The Colonel stepped out briskly, Jack following a few steps behind, while the orderly kept at the regulation ten paces to the rear.

"Whose band is it, orderly, did you hear the adjutant say?"

"Yes, sor," returned the orderly promptly, full of suppressed excitement, for Rooney's youthful Irish heart was dancing at the very thought of a possible brush with Indians. "The adjutant he says, sor, as it's Yellow Bird and his young bucks, and as they've got their war-paint on; the adjutant he says to the quartermaster, who was looking at 'em

through thim big field-glasses, as he thought as there was something up, sor."

"Very good, that will do," returned the Colonel curtly.

Presently the Colonel and his two followers reached the small green square directly in front of the guard-house. Here the flagstaff towered far above the roofs of the long, low adobe buildings of which this frontier post was constructed. From its stately height fluttered the Stars and Stripes. Rain or shine, fair weather or foul, that flag could be seen for miles around, and it served at once as a warning and a protection to the hordes of ignorant foreign settlers who were pouring in to this newly opened-up country, and to the restless, suspicious Indians. the foot of the flagpole two saucy little brass cannon were mounted, named by the children in the post respectively Retreat and Reveille.

The Colonel stood with folded arms and an unusual look of severity upon his fine face, awaiting the arrival of Yellow Bird. Jack, unheeded, stood at his side, imitating exactly both frown and attitude.

The Indians with a furious dash and wild war-whoop drew rein suddenly at the road

18 Jack.

near the guard-house, where the sentry on number one challenged them in fine style: "Halt! who comes there?" and down rattled his gun.

"Yellow Bird, friend," responded the old chief briefly.

"Cor-po-ral of the guard!" sung out the sentry again. Almost instantaneously this important personage appeared and graciously allowed the chief and his warriors to file slowly by.

Colonel Hollingsworth stood silently watching the scene. He was wondering what the Indians thought of it all, for Yellow Bird had only to speak the word and sentry, guard, and guard-house itself would be annihilated.

The Indians had already seen the Colonel, so they rode up to where he stood and dismounted with the swiftness and grace of Sioux warriors, and stood in half-sullen, half-triumphant manner by their sweating ponies. Yellow Bird with outstretched hand advanced towards the Colonel. "Ugh!" he grunted out solemnly, "it is good to see my brother the White Fox once again."

The Colonel gravely shook hands and waited; he knew there was more to follow.

This was about the extent of Yellow Bird's English, so he beckoned to his interpreter to approach.

The interpreter, a handsome young half-breed, named Louis Quick Elk, had but recently returned from Carlisle, but there was nothing to show in his manner or dress that he had had any advantage over his companions. He was painted and blanketed just as they were, but he could speak fluent and fairly good English; in fact he had already established quite a reputation as an orator. Taking his place at Yellow Bird's side, he rendered the old chief's harangue into English.

"It is true, as my young men say," began the old Indian, "that White Fox is a great chief, Big Medicine, and he knows much; he is good and wise, and we know that he will tell the Great Father in Washington of our wrongs and tell him to grant us what we ask—"

"Why, Quick Elk, it is you, is it?" The Colonel had evidently not recognized him before. "Is this what you learned at Carlisle?" eying him sternly.

But the young Indian gazed straight back

into the Colonel's face, saluted, and went on briefly, speaking for himself this time:

"I am come to speak for my people, White Fox. When all goes well I am white, but when trouble comes in the tepees I am Indian. My people are starving; the women and children have no food, and the pappooses die because the mothers cannot nourish them. And now the black death is among us, for the beef they give us rots on the hoof before we shoot it."

The Colonel's brow grew black as night. "Some d——rascality here," he muttered. "Go on," he commanded sternly.

So Quick Elk continued his story, divining at once that he had the Colonel's sympathy. "Our agent is a bad man; 'he is a liar, a thief, and a murderer—"

"Great heavens! what has happened at the agency?" interrupted the Colonel. "Where can Mr. Davis be? Orderly, find the adjutant and tell him to report here at once."

"Yes, sor; there he is now, sor—him and Mr. Barnes."

CHAPTER II.

THE POWWOW.

As the orderly spoke, two young officers could be seen hurrying towards the Colonel. The younger one carried a pair of field-glasses which he had evidently just been using.

"There is a party coming in from the agency, Colonel," called out Mr. Davis. "Mr. Barnes and I have been watching them through the field-glasses."

"I guess it's old Jenkins himself, the old rascal. At any rate it's his buckboard and sorrel team."

At the word "rascal" just a faint flicker flashed across Quick Elk's immobile countenance.

"Yellow Bird wants a 'talk.' He will tell the White Fox his wrongs and his people's sorrows, and his white brother will send the lightning-writing [telegram] to the Great Father in Washington and ask him to send away this bad agent, who steals and lies." "You talk well, Quick Elk; now you must also talk sense. Tell Yellow Bird we will have our talk in the morning; the agent will be present to defend himself. Now go with the adjutant; he will show you a camp. Mr. Davis, see to it that they have tents and rations for three days. Between Jenkins and Yellow Bird this powwow will last three days, or I am much mistaken."

In the meantime Jack was gravely shaking hands and repeating "How kola! how kola!" to the old chief and each of his warriors. "Why, where is Little Horn?" he asked.

Yellow Bird shook his head and looked gloomy, but all he said was "Ugh!"

Little Horn was his sole remaining son, and the very apple of the old chief's eye. He was a handsome little fellow about Jack's age and size, and a boon companion of the young man's whenever he visited the post.

"Little Horn is sick, very sick; the heat burns him up," explained the interpreter. "Yellow Bird is very much afraid his pappoose will leave him. He goes now to ask the medicine-man for powders to cure his son." "Oh, I'm awfully sorry, tell him," said Jack, nodding his head towards the old chief; "and tell him when he goes back I will send Little Horn something good for sick boys to eat—something my mamma makes."

But Yellow Bird understood Jack's proffered sympathy, for he gave a pleased grunt, and passing his hand over the boy's crop of short yellow curls, he said slowly, so that Quick Elk could interpret as he talked: "Little Coyote is the son of a great chief. The father is good and wise, and the son is the same; his hair, yellow like the sun, gives light; his heart, warm like the sun, gives heat, the warmth of a good heart. He is my friend and the friend of my son, and some day he must come and stay with us in our tepees; there he can have a pony of his own to ride, the old men will teach him to fish and trap, and the young men to fight and hunt."

"Oh, that would be dandy!" exclaimed Jack enthusiastically. "I'll come some day sure."

When Jack found that Little Horn had not accompanied his father he was very much disappointed, for he and the little Indian boy had always had a grand time together.

Many a jolly hour had they spent fishing for "suckers" in the muddy Buffalo, trapping prairie-dogs out on the target-range, riding races with their ponies, and trying their skill with their bows and arrows. Mrs. Hollingsworth, fearful for Jack's safety, had done her best to discourage the friendship; but the Colonel heartily approved of it, and allowed Jack many privileges that his mother's fears would have denied him, particularly that of taking his meals with his Indian friends and of having Little Horn share his.

The first time the Indian had dined in state at the Colonel's, Mrs. Hollingsworth watched curiously to see how he would conduct himself. But the boy, with his keen bright eyes full of natural pride and cunning, never ate a single morsel until he had watched to see just what the others did first, choosing in silent admiration Mrs. Colonel herself as his model. His table manners were a source of constant wonder to Nora, the waitress, who between courses would confide her opinion to cook: "Sure an' the haythen ates fur all the world like any Christian."

Only once was he caught unawares. A

dish of olives being placed directly in front of him, he took one, and began to chew it. It was all right, although he didn't like the taste of it, until he came to the stone; he tried to, but simply could not swallow it, so, nothing daunted, he drew in a long breath, and blew the olive-stone across the room. No one laughed, though Jack choked and got red in the face, and Nora, who was passing a dish, fled precipitately to the pantry.

Occasionally Jack dined with his friend in the old chief's tepee, but when he did he confined himself strictly to a ménu of bacon and canned beans, for, as he explained to his mother, "I'm pretty sure what they're made of."

The Colonel having intimated that the "talk" for that day was over, Yellow Bird with a sign to his warriors rode off to a choice camping-spot, just beyond the corral; here the ground sloped gently down to where the Buffalo widened into a broad shallow pond, making an excellent watering-place for their ponies.

The party from the agency came into the post not long after, the agent, Mr. Jenkins, furious that his charges should have left the

reservation right under his nose, as it were, and, truth to tell, rather anxious to hear what complaints the Indians had laid before this impartial officer, of whose justice he had a taste before this, and found not at all suited to his palate.

The big powwow came off the next day on the main parade facing the officers' quarters, the porches of which were filled with sympathetic and interested women and children.

The Indians were drawn up in a big circle with Yellow Bird and the interpreter in the midst, while facing the chief were the Colonel and his officers, and Mr. Jenkins and his subordinates, who looked as if they did not enjoy the situation in the least.

The agent opened fire by demanding in a blustering tone that these Indians, who were disaffected and rebellious, be at once returned to the reservation under a strong military guard; but the Colonel remaining silent, he went on, getting angrier and angrier, to state that this particular band were thieves; that they had threatened his life and meant to burn up the agency.

Quick Elk rapidly interpreting this speech,

Yellow Bird replied with laconic contempt: "Lies! all lies!"

The old chief's answer was brief and to the point, but delivered with a passionate earnestness that convinced his listeners that he was speaking the simple truth. He stated that his people had no sugar and coffee at the last "wakopotomie," or Indian supply distribution; that only half the amount of flour and bacon due them had been given out; and that, worst of all, the beef was so thin and much of it so diseased that it had made his people sick.

Yellow Bird looked very fierce and grim when he made this last charge.

"He's thinking of Little Horn, daddy," whispered Jack excitedly; "and, daddy, it's true about the sugar and things. You know I went down to the agency last time they had a wakopotomie, and I remember perfectly about the sugar and the coffee, and I asked Mr. Rollins, that new clerk down there, why it was; for the Indians, particularly the squaws, were making a big fuss about it; and Mr. Rollins said little boys should mind their own business."

Jack was a good witness for the accusers.

His father knew the child spoke the absolute truth; Jack had never told a lie in all his young life.

"You're sure, Jack?" said the Colonel, laying his hand on the excited little figure.

"Sure, daddy."

"Yellow Bird, will your young men answer to these facts just as you have stated them?"

For answer the chief drew forth a small ivory crucifix which tradition said had been handed down in this Catholic tribe from Father De Smet himself.

At a sign the Indians stepped forth one by one, approached the crucifix, kissed it, then, raising the right hand, said loudly: "It is true, by the Crucified One!"

It was a solemn scene, and even Mr. Jenkins' hardened conscience must have pricked a little, for he began a confused, halting statement, trying to explain that the sugar, etc., was delayed; that he had meant to distribute it when it arrived.

But he wasn't telling the truth, so the Colonel cut him short.

"The facts shall be sent to Washington, Mr. Jenkins. Any explanation you have to offer had better be forwarded there," he said coldly.

Jack had been trying all this time to get another word, so now he burst out: "And I heard Mr. Jenkins tell that red-headed Jonas of his to 'take that meddling kid away and shut his mouth.'"

"Did Jonas succeed?" asked his father with an amused smile.

"Not much; he tried it, but I licked him."

"It seems to me that boy is out of place here in this 'talk,' Colonel," began the agent.

"The 'talk' is over, Mr. Jenkins. I bid you good-day." And the Colonel, followed by all the officers, walked off, leaving Mr. Jenkins nothing to do but follow suit.

Later on the Colonel sent for Yellow Bird and had the interpreter explain carefully to the impatient old chief just what he meant to do.

"Tell him, Quick Elk, that his story is too long to use the lightning-writing, I must send it by letter; and that it will be some time before the letter will get to the Great Father and before he can answer it."

With great dignity the old chief replied, pointing a long lean forefinger in the direction of the road to the agency, where the agent's buckboard was still in plain view: "Unless the Great Father takes away that bad man before the moon is full again, I will take my people and we will go into the hunting-land, where the white man cannot find us."

"That is very little time, with no allowance for delays," the Colonel answered.

But this was Yellow Bird's ultimatum, and he withdrew with a certain savage dignity, refusing the Colonel's invitation to spend a few days at the fort.

Jack sent Little Horn a basket of delicacies sure to please the sick child, also a great many messages.

Immediately after lunch that day Jack disappeared, and no one saw him until dinner-time, when he appeared at the kitchen door with his face and hands plentifully bedaubed with ink, and requested Nora to scrub him clean, making her promise not to tell any one of his inky condition.

The truth was that Jack had been engaged all afternoon on a secret and important mission. He had been writing to the President of the United States, which, as every one knows, is no light undertaking. Right after the noon fatigue-call he had entered the sergeant-major's little private office, and, demanding pen, ink, and paper, had spent the whole of the long hot afternoon on the following original composition:

"Dere Mister Presdent," it read,

"The sergent major sez I orter say your exsellency, but I think it sounds more frendly like to begin jest dere Mister Presdent, and I have a big faver to ask you, so I want to be perticerly frendly. Yellow Bird was here to-day with sum of his young bucks he's a sou chief from the buffalow crick resavashun. He came to tell daddy that his peeple were sick and starvin, becus the agent is a rascle, and his boy jonas is no good either, he kicks the little Indian boys when his father is round to pertek him, but I can lick him, even if he is most to years older than the indians have no sugger and no flower, I no this, fur I was there myself, and the beef is very bad spiled, Yellow Bird calls it bad medcine cus it made his little boy Little Horn sick and his boy is bully fur an indian but I can throw him when we rassel, and all of the wimmen and children are sick and hungry and there are some very nice squaws in Yellow Birds band pertickerly Mrs. red dere, she makes dandy ginger bred.

"Yellow Bird says unless you send jenkens the raskel agent right off, he will take all his peeple and leave the resavashun. you had better do as he wants, dere mister presdent, fer if he goes, ore soldiers here and daddy to will have to make them go back and that means a fight for the young warriors are all ways reddy fur a fight. daddy is writin to you to, but as he says there is so much redtape in the army I thot I wud send this letter so as you cud have plenty of time befur the full moon to look round fer a good man in Mister jenkens place.

"hope in to reseev a faverible anser I am

"very respectfully

"your obedient servant
"John Quincy Hollingsworth

"P. S. the sargent majer sez this is the way to end a ficial letter he helped me spell it, but he dont no I was writin you thats a sekret.

"JACK.

"P.P.S. Every one here calls me just Jack.

"JACK."

The same mail that carried Jack's interesting epistle took also an official statement of the disaffection of the Buffalo Agency Indians, recommending that Agent Jenkins be summarily dismissed. The Colonel made his indorsement pretty severe, for he felt that the Indians ought to be relieved of the presence of this rascal.

CHAPTER III.

JACK'S FRIENDS.

JACK's "most perticerler friends," as he himself called them, were five in number, beginning at Lieutenant Belden down to Running Horse, the half-breed teamster. They were chosen entirely without regard to rank or station. Between these two there were Sergeant McGinnis, who was as good a storyteller as Scheherezade herself in the "Arabian Nights"; Miss Marion Worden, the major's only daughter; and, last but not least, Dorothea Douglass, his constant companion and ally, known to her friends as "Dee." She was a few months Jack's junior, and his most devoted and obedient little slave, perfectly content if she were only allowed to follow humbly in the footsteps of her small tyrant.

A few days after Yellow Bird and his band had departed, the two children met at retreat; they stood in grave silence beneath the tall slender flagpole while the company roll was called, and then with never-failing interest and attention watched the fluttering Stars and Stripes hauled slowly down to the sound of the "Star Spangled Banner," played by the regimental band.

The irreverent "youngsters" in the regiment had been heard to remark that honors and distinctions to the flag were all right in summer, but when the thermometer went down to thirty degrees below zero there was such a thing as too much "S. S. B."

Before the last strain was quite finished Jack leaned over and whispered mysteriously in Dee's curious little ear: "If you'll promise not to tell any one, I'll tell you something."

"Cross my heart, I hope I'll die," responded Dee instantly; for this bit of jargon was the invariable formula used between the two when anything important was under consideration.

"Well, I am going over to the new barracks this evening, and stay till tattoo; my friend Sergeant McGinnis is going to tell me Indian stories. If you weren't such a fraidcat you might go too." "I'm not a fraid-cat; but how can we manage? We're put to bed at eight, bofe of us," said Dee dismally.

"I know that; but can't we get up again?" asked Jack triumphantly. Naughty Jack—he had laid his plans carefully. "Our papas and mammas are going to Mrs. Billings' card party, and Nora's beau, Sergeant Murphy, comes at eight precisely, so Nora won't be bothering around."

Dee's venturesome spirit was charmed with this novel plan, so she agreed to be on hand promptly at the appointed hour. A little after eight the two small conspirators, hand in hand, flew across the great silent parade in the direction of the big new barrack building.

It was unfinished, and there was still so much valuable lumber and material lying around that the contractors had found it necessary to put on a night watchman. Old Sergeant McGinnis, whose time was just out and who had a three months' furlough before re-enlisting, got the job, and this was the attraction for Jack.

The old fellow had a fine bonfire for them, and as he had no idea that the two had run

away without permission, he was soon deep in tales of war and blood.

"Weren't you ever frightened, McGinnis?" asked Jack admiringly of his hero.

"Frightened, is it? faith an' I was. An Injun, an' a tame wan at that, gave me the worst scare I iver had.

"It's in the cavalry I was thin; I niver took on [enlisted] with the 'dough boys' [infantry] till me knees was too stiff to ride a hoss.

"It was out in Oregon in the early '70's that I was sint to the ould Eighth 'B' troop, as raw a recruity as you cud find anywheres.

"Ould Fort Harney, two hundred miles from the railroad, was me first station, and the very first night I got there I was sitting in the orderly room a writin' home to me folks in the ould counthry. 'There's no Injuns to shpake of '—thim was the identical words I was writin'—'an' supposin' there was, it's me as wad show the red haythens as wan Irishman was worth twinty of thim.' Just thin I heered a quare noise outside the windy, like this: 'Ugh! ugh!' and there lookin' at me, wid a knife in his hand, stud a great big painted Injun.

"I yelled bloody murther and took to me heels, screeching all the way to the post trader's that 'the Injuns had come.'

"It took a good manny fights before I

heered the last o' that Injun scare.

"An' that was the first time an Injun had me pretty badly scared, but it wasn't the last," admitted the old soldier honestly enough.

"I don't believe you ever were a coward,

McGinnis," replied Jack reproachfully.

"No more I was, Jack dear," answered the old sergeant; "you see there's a sight o' differ twixt bein' scared outen your life and bein' a coward; it takes a rale brave man, I tell you, to be shakin' wid fear and yit not run. I've niver sarved but wid wan rale downright coward, an' sure he paid dear enough for it—God forgive him!"

"Tell us about it," cried both children in unison.

Tattoo had sounded some time before. A silvery moon was just coming up over the top of the main divide, but Jack and Dee, absorbed in the sergeant's thrilling reminiscences, had lost all account of time, and McGinnis was as bad; it was not often he had

such an appreciative audience. The old man filled his little black clay pipe, gave a puff, and then began:

"It happened long before yous was born; 'way out in old Fort Laramie. The Injuns was pretty bad around there; we dassn't leave the fort for a swim or a fish in the lodge pole, for fear some poor chap wad be picked off; an' whin the ladies wanted to go fer a ride they took a whole throop of cavalry fer escort. Your ma will remember thim days, Jack. We used to burn wood thin; the government didn't use coal, and ivery stick as was burned in the fort we soldiers cut and sawed.

"The wood reservation was about forty miles out, and wan throop at a time would git the saw-mill detail, as we called it, an' the men hated it worst kind. Well, 'B' throop's turn cum at last, but the worst of it was, the captain he was off on leave, and the first liftenant was down at Cheyenne on court-martial duty, so it left the new second liftenant in command. He had not long jined from civil life, an' he didn't know as much about soldiering as Miss Dee here. 'Ribbons' the men called him, for they said as

how he had bin a clerk in a dhry-goods shtore.

"I was a lance corporal, on me good behavior thrying hard for chevrons. Iverything wint well until the second day out, towards evening. The liftenant he beckoned me, an' sez, sez he, 'Corporal, we'll ride ahead a bit an' choose a camp.'

"'Very good, sor,' sez I, salutin'; an' I rode afther him widout a word, though I wanted the worst way in the world to tell him that it wasn't the safest plan in the world in an Injun counthry for two to ride ahead an' choose a camp.

"We rode ahead a few miles; the trail there ran right through a deep narrow cañon wid thick scrub oaks on aither side of it, whin all of a suddent pop-pop! wint a dozen rifles, an' me poor baste just gave wan groan an' dropped dead; me shoulder had a bullet in it, an' me lift leg was bleeding like a shtuck pig. The liftenant wasn't so much as hit, but he was scared to death, as white as a sheet, an' trimblin' so he could hardly sit his horse.

"'I'm hit, sor,' " sez I.

"'Yes, yes, I know,' sez he, his teeth chattering; 'but there's no use in two of us bein' killed. I can't do anything to help you, corporal, so I'll just try an' save me own life.' Wid that he clapped his spurs into his horse and dashed off.

"'Fer God's sake, liftenant, don't lave me to thim red divils, helpless as I am. Yer horse will carry double, sor'; but I might as well have talked to the wind. He niver paid no attention to me; he was that rattled he raley didn't know phwat he was doin', but dashed up the side of the divide with rifle bullets singing after him, an' that was the last I saw of him.

"I said me act of contrition; you'll be after knowin' phwat that is, Jack—"

"I do, too, sergeant," chimed in Dee.

"Expectin' to breathe me last ivery moment; they must have thought the whole throop was just behind us, for no Injun would believe as two white men would be sich fools as to venture out, jist two on 'em. Pretty soon it got dark, and I managed to creep into the bush and covered mesilf with dirt and tumble-weeds. My wounds was bleeding awful and afore long I got faint and I didn't know nothing fer a long time.

"I lay hid all that night and the nixt

day, wondering what had become of the rist of the escort, fur not a sign o' thim had I seen.

"Suddenly towards evening of the second day I heered a bugle sound. 'It's Paddy Ryan blowin' that,' thinks I, fur I knowed his touch; and thin I had sinse enough left, though I was kind o' half crazy, phwat wid the thirst and me wounds, to fire me pistol and shout as loud as I could.

"Soon I heered the quick, even noise—thump, thump! thump, thump! of a throop o' cavalry trotting; I dragged mesilf out on to the road, and faith, if it wasn't me own throop, with Liftenant Darbey in comman' (he is a major now), and they wor out searching fur me and 'Ribbons,' God rist his sowl!

"It turned out that the detail for the saw mill had had a fight with the same band of Injuns as attacked us; but they had beaten them back and made a dash for the fort durin' the night, reportin' me and the liftenant as absent.

"Well, I'm here, but the poor liftenant, there wasn't much o' him left whin they did find him," concluded the sergeant solemnly.

At this doleful ending Dee burst into vio-

lent tears, declaring that she wanted her mamma.

At that instant a long, clear, wailing buglenote sounded.

"Why, Dee Douglass, it's taps!" exclaimed Jack, horror-stricken at the lateness of the hour.

"Bless us and save us, so it is!" said old McGinnis. "Whativer will your pa say, Jack dear?"

"They don't know we've comed," cried poor Dee, who couldn't keep a secret to save her life.

"Thin you're both very bad children," said the old sergeant severely, though his eyes twinkled as he looked at the forlorn little figures in front of him.

"Don't be a cry-baby, Dee," said Jack, with a fine manly impatience. "I'll get you home safely, and tell your father it was my fault; it will be your father who'll punish you, and my mother; that's the difference in our families," said this observing young man.

But the great parade looked vast and awfully lonely in the summer darkness, and there were all kinds of queer spooky-looking shadows.

Clutching Dee's hand tightly, Jack said: "Good-night, sergeant, and thank you for your stories; but I do think you needn't scold us. We'll get plenty of that at home."

"Well, I'll forgive yous this oncet," answered McGinnis, relenting; "an' if you cum agin, wid permission, I'll tell yous the foinest fairy-tales yous iver heerd; an' ivery wan thrue—for yous knows that the little people still live in old Ireland.

"But come, now, I can't leave me post, but I'll take yous over to the sintry at the corral, an' he'll see that yous git home safe, an' mind yous confess yous run away."

Dee found an angry papa and a very anxious mamma hunting her distractedly up and down the "line."

But she was such a tired, sleepy little penitent that they hadn't the heart to scold her—just tucked her in bed.

But Master Jack was rather unrepentant. The most he could be got to say was, he was sorry he'd taken Dee along—"girls always cried, and tattled, and spoiled things anyway." So, as Jack had prophesied, his mother undertook to punish him. He was ordered to keep in "close arrest" all next day,

which meant he couldn't go any farther than the front porch.

Dee was also kept in, but as cook allowed her to help in the ironing in the morning and make cookies in the afternoon, she rather enjoyed herself.

Jack played that he was a brave officer unjustly placed in arrest, and he had great funstalking up and down the front porch dressed in an old blouse and campaign hat of his father's, with the Colonel's best sword clanking at his heels.

"What are you up to now, Jack?" called his friend Mr. Belden, stopping in front of the Colonel's quarters.

"Oh, nothing," answered Jack sheepishly.

"Well, come on and I'll play catch with you awhile, and tell you about a fine plan for to-morrow."

"I'm awful sorry, chum, but I can't; I'm in close arrest this morning," replied the small boy honestly.

"Well, well, that's too bad," said the young officer sympathetically; "what scrape are you in now, old man?"

Whereupon Jack related their adventures of the previous evening. "But I guess what

I'm mostly punished for is taking Dee with me; girls are such tags!"

"You won't mind their tagging when you are a bit older, chummy," laughed the young officer. "I came in to ask your mother if you might go fishing with me to-morrow. And we won't have a single girl tag along."

"I hope she'll let me go; I think we'd better go right in now and try our luck," said Jack quaintly.

Mrs. Hollingsworth, longing to forgive the small culprit, readily gave her permission, and went out at once to consult with Appolyn as to a good lunch for two hungry fishermen.

"We'll have a fine time, Jack; no women folks along to bother us," remarked Mr. Belden.

"Y-e-s, sir;" but it wasn't a very enthusiastic reply.

Mr. Belden smiled, but remarked decidedly: "Girls are a nuisance on a fishing trip."

Presently Jack said: "Dee digs bait fine, and she's a dandy fisher; 'most as good as me."

Mr. Belden sighed and remarked softly,

"Miss Marion does make the best deviled eggs for a picnic I ever tasted."

There was a moment's dead silence; then Jack, in a magnanimous outburst, exclaimed: "Let's ask 'em both; they aren't so very bothering, for girls."

Mr. Belden's face was perfectly grave, but there was a twinkle in his eyes as he agreed to this invitation to be given to the two young ladies.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW JACK KILLED THE COUGAR.

It was a very merry little party that started off on the fishing excursion about ten the next morning. Miss Marion, Dee, and Jack were comfortably stowed away in Mrs. Hollingsworth's basket phaeton, a good-sized hamper and fishing-rods filled up all the available space under the seats, while Mr. Belden rode his big cavalry horse Major.

They were bound for Standing Rocks, a favorite picnic spot, where the Buffalo broadened out into quite a respectable-sized pond surrounded by a growth of scrubby pines and oaks. The great smooth flat rocks which gave the place its name made capital tables for the picnic spreads.

It had been a fine day for sport, the fish had taken the bait splendidly all morning, so that even Dee had actually hooked two fine specimens.

When twelve o'clock came all agreed that it was dinner time. Miss Marion, choosing the largest, smoothest rock, began to unpack the luncheon basket and lay the table. Jack and Dee were busy picking up sticks for the fire, for Miss Marion meant to make tea.

"It's a pity we can't have some of our fish for dinner," remarked Mr. Belden.

"Why, we could if only I had a fryingpan," answered Miss Marion regretfully.

"We might heat stones and bake them Indian fashion, only it takes so everlastingly long, and I for one am too hungry to wait."

"So am I," returned the young girl laughingly; "as for Jack and Dee, they are famished."

"Wait a minute; I know what I'll do. I'll ride over to Jonson's dugout—it's not a half mile from here—and beg, borrow, or steal a frying-pan from the old Swede. I'll just hang my belt and pistol here; don't let the youngsters touch them." As he finished Mr. Belden threw them over a low hanging branch of a scrub oak; then unpacking Major, he dashed off bareback, more like a boy of fifteen than a dignified second lieutenant of cavalry.

Marion and the children soon had the fire

burning briskly, and she and Dee were searching along the edge of the pine grove for a few wild flowers to grace the table as a centrepiece.

Jack stood before the fire feeding it slowly from time to time and thinking of McGinnis's stories of the evening before.

"McGinnis says a fellow's brave all right, even if he is scared to death, as long as he don't run; but I bet when I grow up, I won't even be scared."

Just then Jack's quick ear caught the sound of a large soft body falling to the ground; the underbrush crackled sharply and the child caught the gleam of two wild fierce eyes, as a long, lithe, tawny animal stepped noiselessly into sight.

Trained from his very babyhood to observe keenly and think quickly, the child knew instinctively what this ferocious animal was.

"A cougar," he murmured, the rosy face quite white and both knees shaking with a terrible fright.

To do Jack justice, it was not of himself he was thinking, for the beast had evidently not seen him as yet, but stood swinging his cat-like tail from side to side watching Marion and Dee, who fortunately were unconscious of their danger.

A conversation between Appolyn and Jerry which he had overheard the night before flashed through Jack's mind.

Appolyn had said she had heard a cougar cry; the Indian in her recognized all the cries of the wild creatures of the plains.

"A cougar, is it?" Jerry had answered; "an' faith an' I'd like a chance at his tail."

Then at the old half-breed's puzzled look he had explained whimsically:

"A cougar's near enough to a lion to make an Irishman enjye twisting his tail."

Dee's happy little laugh suddenly rang out, and the cougar crouched, ready for the fatal leap.

This baby of seven had the soul of a hero; he never once thought of deserting his womankind, for it would have been easy enough for him to make his escape by running off. He must save Dee and his dear Miss Marion. There was Mr. Belden's pistol; he could just reach it, and soon possessed himself of it; but how to use it—that was the question.

Jack wasn't afraid to shoot it off, for he had

done so often under his father's or big brothers' careful supervision, and had even fired one of the new rifles at target practice, using a friendly shoulder as a rest; but that had been fun, and this was different.

With a sudden resolve born of desperation, Jack ran lightly towards the cougar, trying to get between it and the two girls.

Recognizing a new enemy the animal, with a fierce sort of purr or snarl, turned on him. Poor Jack! he unconsciously shut both eyes tight, and fired.

Two wild screams rent the air and he heard the rush of a horse, then for the space of a second or two Jack didn't know anything. Presently when he opened his eyes he found himself on Mr. Belden's knees, while Miss Marion was dabbling his face with water, and Dee was weeping unrestrainedly over his dusty shoes.

He sat up rather dizzily, and said with great conviction: "McGinnis was right, Mr. Belden; I was scared to death of that cougar, but I ain't a coward, 'cause I didn't run. Where is he, anyway? I thought I'd killed him."

"No, Jack, but you scared him off.

Cougars are cowardly animals; they seldom attack unless they get a victim all alone. So when the girls screamed and Major and I came rushing to the rescue, and you fired the pistol, it was too much for Mr. Cougar; he turned tail and fled."

It was rather a subdued picnic party that returned to the post with their thrilling tale of adventure, and Jack was made so much of and praised so highly that it did puff him up just a little.

Lieutenant Belden organized a cougar hunt that very night, and with the aid of the Colonel's hounds they ran the animal down. They found the cougar dying, for, oddly enough, both of Jack's shots had hit it; so the skin was brought as a reward of promise to Master Jack.

Dee heard so much of "How I killed the cougar" for the next few days, that she grew very tired of it, and she welcomed with unusual fervor the great preparations for the Fourth of July, that she and Jack were making.

CHAPTER V.

ANOTHER ADVENTURE.

"Он, Dolly dear, may I go? Say yes, first; do, and I'll tell you what it is afterwards," urged Jack, rushing in upon his mother one day not very long after his adventure with the cougar.

"Just promise, dearest, and I'll tell you all about it," cried the wily little diplomat. "It's just the *safest* thing!" he pleaded.

"If it's any kind of an excursion I shall say no," began his mother firmly, "unless they extend no further than the quartermaster's or adjutant's office."

Jack's happy face fell at once.

"Oh, darlin', it's so puffectly safe, and I do want to go so very awfully much," replied the little fellow with a break in his voice which warned his mother that the tears were very near.

"Nothing seems safe, Jack, where you are

concerned. Jack junior, I never knew a boy of your age who possessed a like capacity for getting into scrapes. I don't really feel happy, little son, with you out of my sight," and Mrs. Hollingsworth sighed anxiously.

"It's to go out to the wood reservation.

Mr. Belden is detailed for this time; they are only going to camp out one night, and he has specially 'vited me, and I know he'll take the very bestest care of me—"

"Indeed I will," said a familiar voice, and there stood Mr. Belden, being ushered in by Nora. "I do hope you will let Jack go," he continued. "He is not a bit of trouble and is capital company in the field. You must give me a chance to retrieve myself after that affair of the cougar."

"I am quite sure the Colonel will want him to go; he does like his boys to be manly and independent. But to tell you the truth, the very thought of that cougar and of what might have happened to Jack, completely unnerves me; and I feel as if I could not bear to have the child out of my sight. Jack is my baby, you know, Mr. Belden," finished Mrs. Hollingsworth.

"Let him go-just this time," said the

young officer persuasively, "and I will promise not to let Jack out of my sight once."

"Well, I will let the Colonel decide, and will send you word by the orderly right after luncheon; but remember your promise—not out of your sight once."

"That's just as good as yes," said Jack in a subdued whisper of delight, as he followed his friend out on the porch. "Daddy will surely let me go."

And so it proved, for when the cavalry detachment rode off the next morning early, Jack, by the side of Lieutenant Belden, was at their head.

It was a perfect morning for a march; a slight rain had fallen the night before, just enough to lay the dust and make the prairie road as hard and smooth as a park driveway, while a soft breeze brought out the strong briny smell that prairie grass and flowers seem to possess.

Prairie-dogs innumerable sat on their haunches in front of their holes and barked fiercely as the troopers trotted briskly by. Once they started up a big brown coyote, and, with the dogs in hot pursuit, ran him to earth beneath the rocks.

About four miles out the post road crossed the main stage-road from Alton, the nearest railroad town, about fifty miles south. Coming slowly down it they saw a dilapidated emigrant wagon; the dingy white canvas covers were drawn down tight, and the only signs of life that appeared were two hungry-looking curs beneath the wagon, which barked savagely as Jack and Mr. Belden rode up.

The clumsy-looking vehicle stopped as they approached, and a dirty, stolid-looking man peered out from the driver's seat and drawled out, "Say, be you uns from the fort?"

"Yes; what do you want?" answered Mr. Belden curtly.

"You ain't Doc Brown, be you?"

"No; why do you ask?" answered the young officer.

"Wall, my little gal in there," pointing his dirty finger towards the interior of the wagon, "she fell outen o' the back o' the waggin, an' Ma she thinks as she's broke her arm; leastways she cries an' hollers ef we try to tech it."

Here the sound of low, pitiful sobbing caught their ears.

"Thar, she's at it now, an' there ain't no stoppin' of her; keeps that up day and night. Some folks over to Dade's ranch telled Ma as thar was a doctor over to the camp as would do the doctorin' free; so that's whar we air bound. Ma she jist wud hev us to go, but I faver goin' on to Alton. I ain't calculatin' on travellin' any more than I can help."

During this conversation Jack had made his way to the back of the wagon from whence those pitiful sounds came. Without any ceremony he pushed up the curtain flap and peered in.

Lying on some straw covered with a torn old bedquilt was a little girl of about four years. Her long golden curls were matted and tangled, her cheeks flushed and her eyes bright with fever, but in spite of neglect and dirt she was really a beautiful little thing and it did not seem possible that she could be the child of the squalid-looking man driving and the careworn old woman who sat by the little thing's side vainly trying to hush the child's moans.

Jack's heart swelled with intense sympathy, and he cried out impulsively, "Oh,

can't I help you? Can't I do something for the poor little girl?"

The woman looked at the gallant little figure, the sweet sensitive face with the great serious blue eyes shining with sincere sympathy, and involuntarily her hard face softened a little. "I dunno as yer can do anything. Most likely she'll go like all the rest o' them; we've buried eight, all the way from Missourie to Oregon."

Jack's face flushed up indignantly. "She shan't die!" he burst out. "Dr. Brown will cure her arm, and my mamma will nurse her and make her well; I know she will if I ask her."

Yes, if he was there to see after this little child; but he wouldn't be, and perhaps his mamma would never know they were in the post. If he were only there!

"Hello, Jack, what's the matter now?" cried Mr. Belden, who had just ridden around to see the invalid, and caught sight of Jack's face.

"I'm going back to the post, sir," replied the boy quietly.

"Going back!" cried the astonished young officer, "why, you have been longing to go on this trip for a whole year!"

"I know, sir," and Jack's voice quavered a little; "but I think I'd better go back and look after this sick child."

"Nonsense!" was just on the tip of Mr. Belden's tongue, but there was such a sweet look on the little lad's face that the officer only said: "Humph! Well, I'll have to go with you, for I promised your mother I wouldn't let you out of sight. Wait a minute and I'll give Sergeant Dolan his orders, and we'll ride back with our friends here."

When, two hours later, Mrs. Hollingsworth, sitting on the front porch watching guard mounting, saw this strange little cavalcade draw up in front of the hospital, she was sure her worst fears were realized and that Jack was hurt. She fairly flew across the parade ground, only to have the situation explained by Mr. Belden; for Jack had gone to the doctor's office, while he was examining the poor broken arm.

"I wouldn't disappoint Jack's trusting heart for all the world. That child shall have all the beef tea and wine jelly that she can possibly take; and thank you, Mr. Belden, for coming away back with my boy."

"Oh, a promise is a promise, Mrs. Hollingsworth," said Mr. Belden, laughing; "but don't tell the Colonel, for I have really deserted my command, and I shall have to do some hard riding to overtake it. Tell Jack if he needs any money for his protégés to put me down for a fiver." And Mr. Belden darted off just in time to escape the Colonel's keen eyes.

"What's all this about Jack's coming back, Dolly?" he asked. "Wasn't that Belden?"

"Was it?" returned Mrs. Colonel innocently; "these young men all look so alike. But come, John, let us go in and help Jack with his injured charge."

"Yes, yes, my dear; but that certainly did look like Mr. Belden."

CHAPTER VI.

THE DONATION PARTY.

THE idea originated with Miss Marion, who had become quite as interested in Jack's forlorn family as he could wish for.

The woman's story was soon told; her husband belonged to that class of restless, shiftless people known in the West as "movers." They had been on the road five years and over, and had travelled from their home in Missouri out to Oregon and back again, twice, staying a few months in one place and then in another.

The life had been too much for the children and they had lost eight then, as the woman told Jack.

"An' when Louezy got hurt I jest gin up," the poor mother said.

"What do you call your little girl?" asked Mrs. Hollingsworth kindly.

"Louezy, ma'am; she was born in the hos-

pital in Omaha, and on the wall opposite my bed was the picter of a lovely queen a-coming down the stairs, an' I jest took sech a fancy to that picter that I had my little gal christened after her."

"Poor Queen Louise!" murmured Mrs. Hollingsworth. "I hope your little namesake will have a more peaceful life than yours was."

The Halsey family were "out" of everything in the way of eatables, so Marion had proposed this "donation party," as she called it; it certainly was an original affair, if not quite a swell society function. Every one who came had to bring something in the way of groceries and provisions.

The party was given in the big post hoproom, at one end of which was a small but complete stage.

The audience after depositing their "tickets" with Mr. Belden, who occupied the box-office—i. e., a huge quartermaster table from the mess hall—were seated before the vividly painted drop-curtain, the work of a gifted and artistic extra-duty man.

The scene presented was a sort of Custer massacre in miniature. It was so realistic,

with its scalped and dying soldiers, its fierce Indian warriors in war-paint and feathers, that Dee had wailed with terror at first seeing it.

But Jack had only coolly and rather scornfully remarked that the horses were awfully out of perspective.

The entertainment consisted of a clever play in which half a dozen of the children took part, some singing by the older people, a medley of popular airs from the Bachelors' Mandolin Club, and last but not least, a quaint and pretty old-country dance by Jack and Dee.

When the entertainment was over and the originators of it were free to count their gains, Jack was fairly wild with delight, for the big table was heaped up and running over with useful and good things to eat. Each of the bachelors had brought a fifty-pound sack of flour, for part of the fun was the rule that every one must himself actually bring the price of admission; what they brought was left to individual generosity. The Colonel had entered with a fine ham hung from either arm. Mrs. Hollingsworth had brought a dainty pale-blue wrapper and a pair of bedroom slippers for the little invalid.

"Mamma, it must be something to eat!" expostulated Jack.

"Yes, little son, I know; but these were so much easier to carry; and I mean to take them over to the hospital after your party is over. Jerry is bringing my contribution over—some strawberry jam for your 'lame child';" that was the name Jack had given Louezy.

"Well, that's better," exclaimed the small boy, quite mollified.

Mrs. Hollingsworth disappeared after the performance and they were just wondering where she could be, when she and Dr. Brown came hurrying in.

"Well, I think our young 'good Samaritan' ought to be well satisfied with to-night's work," called out Mr. Belden.

"What did you call me?" interrupted Jack.

"Go and read your Bible, young man, and don't ask questions," returned the young officer teasingly.

But here Mrs. Hollingsworth's voice broke in: "Oh, Jack, I have come with the best gift of all. Dr. Brown has persuaded Louise's father and mother to leave the child with him for a time, until they settle down and make some sort of a decent home. The doctor has told them that the little thing will need the most careful attention for the next year; she is very frail. I am more glad than I can say that we may look after the child; she has stolen into my heart, as she has every one's else." And Mrs. Hollingsworth smiled and then sighed, for the thought of her own little dead baby daughter being placed as this child was, wrung her tender heart.

"Doctor, you're a trump," said Mr. Belden, shaking one hand hard.

Marion excitedly seized the other, saying, "Oh, you darling!" while Jack, who was strictly up to date in his slang, murmured, "He's a peach!"

"Nonsense, nonsense, good people!" cried the doctor. "You're making a mountain out of a molehill. I'm taking the child for purely professional reasons, and my housekeeper is growing fat and lazy for want of work; the child will liven her up a bit."

The very next day the "mover" and his poor wife started on their Western journey again. The mother seemed heart-broken at parting from her little girl, but she wouldn't

desert her husband, and he could not be induced to remain at the post.

For a few days Louise wept and fretted for her mother, but she soon became reconciled and began to enjoy thoroughly her new life.

The day after the donation party the Colonel met Jack going across the parade in the direction of the hospital, carrying his small dime savings bank and a bottle of a queer-looking mixture.

"What are you doing, Jack?" exclaimed his father wonderingly.

Jack blushed a little, but answered honestly: "I'm trying to do like the good Samaritan; I looked it up in the Bible. Mr. Belden said I was one, an' he took oil and wine. Appolyn gave 'em to me, when I splained what I wanted to do with them. I took my bank 'cause I didn't know how much two shillings was; do you, daddy? I hope it won't take it all," shaking his bank anxiously, "for I've been saving up for the Fourth of July ever since Christmas."

The Colonel, amused and touched, reassured his small son and sent him on his way rejoicing.

CHAPTER VII.

JACK EARNS FIVE DOLLARS.

JACK's letter to the President weighed upon his mind heavily; it was almost more of a secret than his seven years could keep. Occasionally he threw out a mysterious hint or two to Dee, which made the little girl wildly curious.

"You got a secret?" she asked reproachfully, for heretofore they had always shared their secrets as they did their candy.

"I have, and it's a dandy one, too."

"If Yellow Bird does go on the war-path, Dee," announced Jack one morning as he and Dee sat dabbling their toes in the irrigating ditch that ran the length of the "line."

"Little boys aren't allowed to fight," re-

turned the young lady crushingly.

"Humph! didn't I kill that cougar, and didn't I just lick that agent's boy Jonas?

Just give me a chance, and I'll fight him again."

"Pooh! what do you know about fighting, Jack Hollingsworth?"

"Lots; our whole family are fighters. Dick needn't think he's the only fellow in the family that's going to West Point. The Quincys and the Hollingsworths have always been soldiers." Jack was quoting his mother now, word for word, as he had a quaint little way of doing; and Mrs. Colonel was well up in ancestry, being an ardent "D. A. R."

"My great-great—well, a lot of greats—grandfather Quincy was captured by Indians while his father and mother had gone to church; the Indians kept him a long, long time as a 'hostiage of war.' They made the 'great-greats,' and some of the other settlers near them, pay them a lot, and it was only when the governor threatened to send the soldiers against them that the Indians brought him back—and he was just a little boy like me. Now, Dee, if Yellow Bird was smart he might try a plan like that; just ride into this post some day, grab up a child, and ride off before the sentrels could stop him;

then when he had his people hidden up in the mountains where no one could find them, he'd send a message to daddy and say he'd keep you—we'll spose he'd grabbed you —until the President sent off Jenkins."

"Yes," replied Dee, looking nervously around, "but I don't want them to grab me; they'd better take you. Boys would be better."

"Perhaps they would," assented Jack; "they wouldn't be cry-babies anyway. But I don't believe it will be necessary for the Indians to wait much longer, for I wr—" Jack stopped short; he had almost let the important secret escape him.

"What did you say? What can you do

about it?" began Dee curiously.

"Oh, nothing," said Jack; then changing the subject, "Come in my house and I'll show you my list for the Fourth of July. We just celebrate this year, I tell you; you know it's my birthday too, and I'm going to have a regular Fourth-of-July party—lots of fire-crackers for the boys and torpedoes for the girls."

"I shall have firecrackers," put in Dee promptly.

"Well, I guess the tomboys can have them," replied Jack teasingly.

"I mean to have them," answered Dee coolly. "When you go to confession, Jack Hollingsworth, I know one thing—Father Sayre won't allow you to tease me and make me mad and cry."

"Pooh, miss, you don't know anything about it; only Catholics know about confession," said Jack loftily.

"I do know about it. Nurse told me eszackly what you do; and when you go, I'm going—so there!"

"You can't," protested Jack.

"I can," replied the young lady.

"You can't."

"I can."

" Can't."

" Can."

"Hello, hello here, what is all this 'canning' about?" and a gentle hand was laid on each angry little head, and a tall, finelooking young priest stood gazing at the children with such a contagious sort of a smile that involuntarily both red angry little faces smoothed out, and the children had the grace to look ashamed of themselves. "Protestants can't go to confession, can

they, Father Sayre?" asked Jack.

"Well, they don't often want to, Jack," admitted the young priest cautiously, while his eyes twinkled merrily.

"Mamma said I might," insisted Dee.

"Well, we'll see about it, Dee; it would be hard to let Jack get ahead of you even in confession, wouldn't it?" replied Father Sayre smiling. "Jack, I hope you know the Confiteor by heart, and I also hope your Latin pronunciation has improved since my last visit."

"Well, I know most of it, Father. Mr. Belden's heard me every day most; but it's a funny language. Daddy talks it one way, Mr. Belden another, and you a different way still."

"Yes, I know it's hard; but you can't be an altar-boy for me until you have learned it, so I shall have to think of some plan to make it easy, for I would like to have you serve for me this next Sunday."

"I'll try awful hard, Father," said the little fellow wistfully.

"How's your bank? I heard that the

'good Samaritan' had helped himself rather liberally from its funds."

"It's so empty it rattles," replied Jack impressively; "but I don't care, for it buyed Louise a lot of things."

"You'd been saving up ever since Christmas-time for the Fourth, hadn't you?"

"Yes, Father."

"Well, I'll tell you, Jack, if you can recite the Confiteor perfectly in Latin when you come to confession Saturday afternoon I'll drop a five-dollar gold piece in that bank of yours."

Jack's gratitude at this liberal offer was unbounded, and he fairly flew in the house then and there to begin studying at once.

"I really felt rather guilty," laughed Father Sayre, in telling Mrs. Hollingsworth of his offer to Jack, when that young man had gone most reluctantly to bed.

"Yes, I should think you might," agreed Mrs. Hollingsworth, trying to look severely at the young priest's handsome smiling face. Mrs. Hollingsworth, though a great deal older than Father Sayre, had known him all her life, for their fathers' plantations away down on the "eastern shore" touched, and the two

families, like most others in that favored district, were even related and cousined each other.

"Well, I only meant, Cousin Honoria, that I felt guilty in accepting such fervent thanks from the youngster; for I am really afraid it was only half a dozen for Jack and six for myself. I do love the Fourth—firecrackers and all the rest of the fun."

"Yes, I remember well when you as captain of the 'Lee Cadets' stole the old Confederate cannon from the court-house one Fourth of July and brought them away out to our plantations and fired a midnight salute that blew up the cannon and nearly did the same to the Lee Cadets, and scared us womenfolks almost to death. How angry my father was! Billy was the baby then, and it was the first time my husband and I had been home since the war."

Father Sayre laughed heartily: "I'm afraid I was not a model in the days of my youth; I remember that prank very well—also the punishment I got."

"Do you remember that ancient old prophecy your ancestors brought over from England?

"God's blessyng eke shall rest on all born of Sayre blude,

While it giveth a soldier to the sword and eke one to Christ's Rood.'

"Who could possibly have foretold that you, the wild harum-scarum, always in some scrape, should be the priest, and Cecil, the meek and mild, should blossom out into a full-blown dashing cavalryman?"

"I am a soldier too, cousin—a soldier of the cross, as the old couplet runs. Truly, God's ways are not ours." And a look of infinite peace and sweetness stole over the young priest's fine features.

The week passed all too quickly for Jack and Dee. Father Sayre was their constant companion, and the two children trotted after him as he visited his numerous but scattered parishioners. During the week Running Horse's newest pappoose was baptized, with Jack as godfather and Marion Worden as godmother. Running Horse had invited Mr. Belden to stand, but that young officer had hastily declined. Father Sayre, of course, officiated.

The little Indian was christened John Hol-

lingsworth Running Horse in honor of the Colonel, and Mrs. Colonel sent Madame Running Horse a hamper of really lovely baby clothes. As the poor squaw saw the warm flannels, the pretty white dresses, and the dainty little wrappers, her eyes filled with tears. The poor untutored tongue was speechless, but the grateful mother-heart caused her to seize Mrs. Hollingsworth's hand and kiss it warmly.

"You have made two people very happy to-day, cousin," said Father Sayre as he sat down to dinner that evening, "and have made two friends for life in Mr. and Mrs. Running Horse. I saw them as I came in this evening parading up and down 'laundress row,' with John H. junior attired in one of the gorgeous new wrappers or coats, or whatever you call it."

"I am glad it pleased the poor things; Marion and I really enjoyed making them."

"I shall have to teach the little kid his catechism and prayers when he gets old enough, won't I?" queried Jack.

"Yes, my son, especially the Confiteor, in Latin," responded Father Sayre.

"Oh, don't you worry over that, Father! I'll have my five-dollar gold piece all right to-morrow, you see if I don't."

"I hope you will, young man, and I only wish I could be here to help you with your Fourth-of-July fun."

"Oh, can't you, Father?" cried Jack, sorrowfully.

"Come, Father Sayre, we can't let you off," joined in the Colonel; and "Once we get you we mean to keep you," said Mrs. Hollingsworth.

"Well, let me see; the Fourth comes on Sunday—next Sunday too. What day will you celebrate here in the post?"

"Monday," returned the Colonel, "for Saturday is always a holiday anyway."

"Well, perhaps then I can manage it. I promised the Sisters at the agency that I would help their scholars observe the day patriotically, but they mean to celebrate on Saturday. Couldn't some of you drive over to the agency and spend the day? and I will return with you;" and finally the matter was so arranged.

Saturday dawned at last, and Jack, in his efforts to prepare himself well for his first

confession, and also to learn by heart the Confiteor, was rather trying to his family.

Coming in from her morning drive Mrs. Hollingsworth heard Jack's voice issuing from the day-nursery in a curious sort of a monotonous chant; peeping in she discovered him in his pale blue blanket dressing-gown (this evidently represented a cassock) standing in front of the pretty oratory gravely chanting the Confiteor over and over again, while reposing in the rocking-chair was "McGinty," a huge but dilapidated rag doll, the well-beloved of Jack's babyhood, which he had played with, and loved and fondled; even now in the strict privacy of his own room, or in bed-for the doll always slept in Jack's own little white bed-McGinty was a prime favorite.

"Now, McGinty, how was that? You see I do know it through, without a mistake; and now see if I know my confession." Down went the boy plump on his knees; then with a perfectly grave and reverent little face he began: "Father, bless me, for I have sinned."

But here his mother slipped quietly away, her eyes wet with sudden tears. "The sweet innocence of a child," she murmured. "God grant that you may never have a more serious confession to make, my little son!

"Perhaps God has chosen my boy for the better part; he too may be a soldier of the cross," she thought, with the tender loving mother-pride that hopes and plans and strives to see into the dim future. "The dear child, he looked like an angel—so spiritual and devout!"

But her tender thoughts received rather a shock that evening, when Jack came flying up to her room just before dinner with this announcement: "I made a dandy confession, Dolly dear! Father Sayre's a peach, and I wasn't a bit scared and I didn't get rattled at all. Once when I stopped to remember some more sins Father Sayre said, 'Do you ever tell tales?' and I said, 'No, I don't, but Dee does;' that was the only break I made, for of course you mustn't tell other people's sins, I know; only that just kind of slipped out."

"Oh, young America," smiled Mrs. Hollingsworth to herself, "with your slang and yet honesty and purity of motive, what would Madame D'Arblay think if she could hear my son talking of making a 'dandy'

confession and calling his confessor a 'peach'! However, I shan't mind so long as the small penitent is as genuinely honest and sincere as Jack is."

At confession that afternoon Jack had said his Confiteor in Latin right through without a single mistake, and in the evening after dinner he repeated it again, much to his father's delight; so when Father Sayre produced a shining five-dollar gold piece, the reward he had promised Jack, the Colonel did likewise, and the young man felt quite like a bloated bondholder, for he had sufficient money to buy out the post exchange in the matter of fireworks.

It began to rain not long after dinner, and the evening, as it often does on the plains, set in so cool and raw that Mrs. Hollingsworth ordered a wood fire started in the "den," and they all gathered around its cheery blaze talking over old times as "grown-ups" are wont to do; and Jack was an eager, absorbed little listener, for all three—priest, soldier, and matron—had seen much of the world and of men and women.

So when Jack proposed that each one tell a

story, a bran-new one that he had never heard, they smilingly agreed. Jack made them draw straws for first turn, which fell to Mrs. Hollingsworth.

"Have some war and fighting in it, Dolly dear," he urged.

"Well, it begins with plenty of both," she answered, "and I shall call it

"A CAPTIVE KNIGHT."

"A good name, my dear; I admit I surrendered fully and completely thirty-five years ago to the prettiest girl on the 'eastern shore,' even though she was a hot-headed little rebel in short skirts," said the Colonel gallantly.

"Nonsense, John, I was only a child of fourteen; and besides, you are telling my story before I have half begun," replied Mrs. Hollingsworth; but she blushed and looked as pleased as a girl.

"Were you the little rebel, Dolly, and was daddy a knight?" asked Jack curiously.

"You shall hear the tale for yourself, little son."

"And I will tell the sequel," interrupted the Colonel, thoroughly entering into the spirit of the proposed evening's amusement. "Now you begin, my dear."

CHAPTER VIII.

A CAPTIVE KNIGHT.

"IT was the very last of August, 1862," began Mrs. Hollingsworth, "when Lee's forces had met General Pope's army and defeated him in the second battle of Bull Run.

"'Stonewall' Jackson was the idol of the South, the personal hero of every man, woman, and child of Southern sympathy in Maryland.

"How exultingly we sang 'Maryland, my Maryland,' waved our Confederate flags of home manufacture, and ate without a murmur our restricted ménu of corned beef and corn bread.

"My father and three brothers were all serving in the Confederate Army, and my mother and myself, with Maum Sue and Moses the butler, were alone in the house, a few only of the other slaves having remained faithful, and these lived over in the quarters—I don't think you can remember very much about those times, cousin?" asked Mrs. Hollingsworth of Father Sayre.

"Very little, I confess," he answered; "and yet there were some few incidents that impressed themselves upon my mind very vividly, such as the visit of a Union foraging party which carried off every pig and chicken on the plantation."

"Yes, I remember," laughed Mrs. Hollingsworth, "also the results of that expedition; you were all reduced to the corned-beef and 'pone' diet that we had been living on at our place for such a long time. How you boys—you and your two brothers—hated it! Your mother used to have your old nurse Aunt Jenny spank all of you three times a day to make you eat it. Your mother thought it positively necessary for your health that you should eat meat three times a day."

"Yes," said Father Sayre laughing heartily, as did the Colonel and Jack, at the idea of small boys having to be spanked into eating their meals. "And do you know," he continued, "that though I really cannot re-

member having to eat it, the sight or smell of corned beef is nauseating to me to this very day; as for corn bread, I might enjoy it if I were starving, but not otherwise."

"I feel very much that way in regard to sweet potatoes, of which we had an abundant crop every year of the war, and which my mother insisted upon my eating; I simply can't touch them now. Well, to go back to our war and fighting, which Jack has requested—it was about this time that Lee crossed the Potomac above Washington, believing that thousands of Marylanders would flock to join him in his proposed march to Philadelphia; but in this idea, as we know, he was sadly mistaken.

"It was the middle of September that 'Stonewall' Jackson captured Harper's Ferry, and then came a terrible period of suspense to my mother and me, for all our dear ones were with Lee and Jackson.

"On the 17th of September the battle of Antietam, one of the bloodiest of the whole war, was fought. As an eye-witness describes it, 'The bodies of the "boys in blue" and the "boys in gray" lay in ranks like swaths of grass cut by the scythe.'

"News of the terrible fight reached us through the negroes, but no stragglers or scouting parties of either army had as yet invaded our peaceful home, when one evening about dusk I was returning from spending the afternoon with your mother, cousin, when just as I reached the oak grove half way between our two plantations I heard the sound of rapid firing near me, and two troops of Union cavalry appeared on the summit of Holly's hill, hotly pursued by a force of Confederates who greatly outnumbered them.

"They were so near and the light was yet so plain that I could distinguish the faces of the two leaders: the Confederate was gray-haired and old, but the Yankee commander looked a mere boy, and I began to feel dreadfully sorry for him—"

"Well, I was rather youthful," here remarked the Colonel. "You know my class was graduated from West Point a year ahead of time; I was only nineteen when I got my commission."

"Then and there, right before my horrorstricken eyes, a desperate fight took place. The Federals were entirely outnumbered, but they would not give up, making a stubborn stand behind some trees. I closed my eyes for an instant, but a fierce yell of triumph made me open them to see that the boy officer was desperately wounded or dead; he had fallen from his horse, and this completed the rout of the Federals; they broke and scattered in confusion. The Confederates, only pausing to carry off their wounded, dashed after them.

"It seemed an age, but in reality the whole affair had not lasted ten minutes. Child as I was, I felt that those wounded, helpless men must not be left without immediate assistance; so mounting my old pony I rode rapidly to several near-by farmhouses for help; many of the poor-class white farmers were secretly Union sympathizers. Then I rode wildly home and summoned our faithful old black butler Moses to help me carry the wounded officer to our house. The old fellow got Maum Sue, who was as strong as a man, and together carrying a shutter, the usual improvised litter in emergencies, they hurried off, I following slowly. We had hastily decided to bring the wounded officer into the house as secretly as possible, for the negro

field-hand would talk, and he would not be safe nor would we, if it were known that we were harboring a Union officer; and I could not regard this boy, a young fellow just like Billy, as an enemy. No, I would help care for him and keep him safely until he was well enough to join his own people, just as I hoped any Northern girl would do if one of my brothers were so placed.

"So thinking, I had followed slowly after Moses and Old Mammy, and met them returning with their still unconscious burden, just at the big carriage gate. As we all moved slowly up the long drive we saw coming around the house a negro on foot leading his horse, while he walked beside a tall Confederate officer who would have been unable to sit his horse if the negro had not carefully and tenderly supported him.

"It did not take me long to recognize Billy, my youngest and favorite brother, and Jules, his black body-servant, who had accompanied him to war. Without disturbing my mother we soon had both the wounded lads comfortably in bed, neither one knowing of the presence of the other, the young Union officer being still unconscious, and Billy half

dead with fatigue and pain from his uncaredfor wounds.

"For a week all went smoothly; both invalids made rapid progress towards recovery under my mother's and Maum Sue's skilful and tender nursing. We all agreed that it was best for the wounded officers not to know of each other's presence, and in our great rambling house, built in colonial times, and added to to meet the wants of each new generation of Sands, it was not a difficult task as long as the two invalids remained confined to their beds.

"One Sunday morning about a week after their arrival, Moses came rushing into the dining-room exclaiming that the Yankees had come. My mother, thinking of Billy, became so agitated as to be incapable of thought; so seeing that the defence had devolved upon me, I determined to employ strategy.

"Cool and calm as you please I walked out on the veranda and demanded haughtily to know what this intrusion meant. The Yankee captain doffed his cap politely and said: 'It has been reported at our headquarters that you are harboring an officer here.' Of course he meant a Confederate officer, but he had not said so. 'Yes, we have a wounded officer in the house,' I answered at once; 'if you wish to speak to him I will take you to his room.'

"The captain looked puzzled; he had evidently expected to meet with tears or resistance. Calling to a sergeant and two or three troopers to follow him, he went up-stairs with me, and I opened the door of Mr. Hollingsworth's room, saying with a flourish, 'Some Yankee friends to inquire for you;' and I left, but not before I heard the delighted exclamations of the two men:

"'Well, this is a sell! I'm after a Confederate officer, and find you, Jack Hollingsworth, who were reported as killed or missing for over a week.'

"They both laughed, and I heard my wounded Yankee say, 'There's no wounded officer here but me; you can take my word for it, old fellow. And I really owe my life to that plucky little girl and her mother's good nursing. You needn't go through the formality of searching the house; I'll take it as a personal favor if you don't.'

"And so that affair ended; but two or

three days after this, old Moses came rushing in again to say that a body of Confederates were coming up the avenue. 'They's after Mars Hollysworth, Miss Honey' [the house servants never called me Miss Honoria], cried old Moses, who had become, darky fashion, very fond of the young Northerner.

"'Well, they shan't have him, Moses,' I answered firmly; for I had quickly decided to employ the same tactics I had used with the Federal detachment that had paid us a visit the week before; with a slight difference, however, for then my forte had been to be cool and indifferent in the face of the enemy, now I must be all welcome and enthusiasm; but to tell the truth, the sight of the beloved gray uniform nearly frightened me to death, for I knew that if the young Union officer were captured and carried off a prisoner it would mean death, in the state his half-healed wounds were.

"As the soldiers, commanded by a fine-looking young fellow with a major's shoulder-straps on, rode up to the front steps and dismounted, I rushed out to meet and welcome them.

"'How glad I am to see you!' I exclaimed; 'do come right in!'

"'Thank you, Miss Sands; it is Miss Sands, is it not?" queried the young officer.

"I bowed a dignified assent.

"'I am Major Carter, of the Fifth Maryland Cavalry.'

"'Billy's regiment!' I exclaimed in genuine delight.

"He smiled as he answered, 'Yes, I am in Billy Sands' regiment and also in his battalion. But I have come on a most disagreeable errand, and one I am sure that will prove futile.' ['I hope it will,' I mentally ejaculated.] 'It has been reported at our headquarters that you are harboring a wounded officer, and I have been detailed to search your house. It is an intensely disagreeable duty; I hope you will acquit me of any intentional rudeness.'

"'We have a wounded officer, and we have tried to keep his being here a secret; but come, I will take you to him at once.' And I immediately led the way to Billy's room. 'Major Carter, of your regiment, Billy,' I said, as I opened his door.

"'Well, Billy Sands, are you the Yankee officer I have been sent to capture?'

"'I reckon so, Major,' laughed Billy when the situation was explained to him; 'I am the only wounded officer in this house, I assure you! My sister is too hot a little "Secesh" to harbor anything in the shape of a blue uniform.'

"'I sincerely beg your pardon, Miss Sands, for this unnecessary intrusion; further search is of course needless.'

"I thanked him, forgave him, and walked away delighted, but almost conscience-stricken, at the success of my plan.

"We were not troubled after this, and in ten days Billy was well enough to leave, which he did, not knowing that he left an enemy behind him. It was fully three weeks before our young Yankee officer was able to leave, and we all grew to like him very much; he told us about his home and family and of the little sister nearly my own age.

"Moses got a horse and a negro guide to take him into the Union lines, and he got safely off one dark night in October. Before leaving he asked me to give him a souvenir, so I took off the blue hair-ribbon that tied back my curls and handed it to him saying, 'You are not fighting on my side, Sir Knight, but so long as you fight bravely and honestly you may wear my colors.'

"'Thank you, my liege lady,' he replied gayly. 'Some day we shall fight on the same side, for you haven't seen the last of

your captive knight.'

"And I hadn't; for six years later, when I went to spend a year with my aunt, Mrs. Elliot, whose husband had been loyal to the Union and was then Colonel of the Twelfth Cavalry and stationed at the big gay frontier part of Steel, the first person I met as I stepped out of the ambulance was my Captive Knight!"

When the applause had subsided the Colonel said: "Well, now I will tell the sequel, as I promised; but the real hero of my story is a plain private soldier, to whom, under God, I owe my life and happiness. The story, as I shall tell it, I got from actual eyewitnesses. I shall call it 'Maloney's Madonna.'"

CHAPTER IX.

MALONEY'S MADONNA.

"I RECOGNIZED my little rebel nurse as she stepped out of the ambulance," said the Colonel; "but she was no longer a little girl in short skirts with hair hanging down her back, but a tall beautiful woman."

"You must not be such a flatterer, John," interrupted Mrs. Hollingsworth blushing.

"That doesn't express half the truth, my dear," was the Colonel's gallant response.

"Go on with your story, my dear; it will soon be bedtime for Jack."

"Maloney was a fine type of the old soldier," began the Colonel, "a warm-hearted brave old Irishman, with the one seemingly incurable fault of drunkenness; he would keep perfectly sober for months and then go on a series of desperate sprees that would land him first in the guard-house and often in the hospital.

"He was a great character, but such a fine all-round sort of a soldier that his company and post commander had been very lenient with his breaches of discipline. He was a very strict disciplinarian himself, and was wont to air his ideas for the benefit of the more youthful troopers. One evening Maloney sat in the small squad room of 'B' troop 'bucking' for orderly. The words 'to buck' mean, in soldier parlance, to work very hard for orderly to the commanding officer, for this fortunate member of the guard does not have to walk post.

"The old fellow was the centre of an admiring group of stalwart young cavalrymen, who were listening to his philosophizings and at the same time trying to learn the secret of the high polish the old soldier always managed to give his gun and side arms by the use of a queer-looking black liquid.

"'Discipline [with the accent on the second syllable] was made fer the army, an' the army was made fer discipline,' he was saying, as he briskly polished his belts with the mysterious compound, of which, drunk or sober, he could not be coaxed to divulge the secret.

""But there's two kinds of discipline;

sure it makes a great sight o' differ on which side the picket line you are; there's wan fer soldiers and "rookies," * an' wan fer "orfercers." An' sure it's not me as wad have it anny different.'

"'My rigiment was serving in a post wid volunteers just the last year of the war, an' thim fellows had no idee of phwat the wurrud meant.

"'Wan bitther cowld night in January I was walking me post, a turrible lonely wan, up by the corral; me beat was to walk around and around thim hayshtacks, to keep the darkies from staling ivery blissid bit o' the hay. Thinking there was no danger o' the orfercer o' the guard comin' fer some time—more shame to me!—I crept aways in the hay to keep warm. Well, I niver hearin' him, along cum the orfercer of the guard, a volunteer feller, and sure niver a sintry cud he find, when all of a suddent he seed me brogans stickin' out through the hay.

"" Pull in yer feet, ye blackguard!" sez he, "fer if the 'orfercer o' the day' sees 'em, sure he'll pull yer belts." '†

^{*} Recruits.

[†] Put him in the guard-house.—This is a true story.

"A hearty laugh of appreciation having greeted this anecdote, the old soldier looked superior as he answered:

"'Well thin an' yous needn't to laugh; begorra! thim days has changed. The last time I was up, the Summary Court, he sez, sez he, "Maloney, the nixt time you're drunk it's a gineral court or dishonorable discharge"—me as has served me counthry twinty-five years! but begorra, boys, he's right.'

"This was a serious threat, and so the troopers in 'B' felt it to be; for the 'Summary Court' was Major Brown, a most lenient officer who had done his best to save Maloney from disgrace. Something must be done, decided 'B' troop. And the very next pay-day they tried a novel plan. Maloney fell from grace and was towed to 'B' troop barracks long after 'taps' by sorrowing friends, and put to bed.

"Next morning as the reveille gun boomed out, Maloney, from long force of habit, opened his eyes and started to tumble out of bed; but with a groan he sank back, and was just about to close them when his gaze rested upon a small red-coated monkey sitting on

the iron foot-rail of his bunk. The small squad-room was apparently deserted; only apparently, though, for from behind a dozen red-curtained lockers twice as many curious eyes watched him.

"'Well, I'm glad it's monkeys, an' not snakes, thanks be to St. Patrick!' remarked Maloney, as he slowly drew himself up into a sitting posture.

"'If it's the "jims" I have, I'd as lave

consort with monkeys as most things.

"'You remind me fer all the world of that little Frinchy phwat's jist jined,' addressing the monkey gravely. There was a smothered titter at this, for the 'Frinchy' was behind one red curtain.

"'There's some as says we're descinded from monkeys; the Frinch may be, but niver an Irishman!'

"The monkey slowly arose, cut a caper or two, then gravely removed his small red and

tinsel cap, begging for pennies.

"'Sit shtill, ye spalpeen!' roared the old fellow, throwing his pillow at the vision his diseased imagination, as he supposed, had conjured up. The pillow struck the small animal fairly in the breast. Giving a shrill cry of rage and pain, the monkey toppled over; and that was the end of the monkey cure.

"'I knew yez was behint thim curtains ivery toime,' declared Maloney scornfully. 'An' if yez think to scare Maloney out of a dhrunk, 'twon't be monkeys as will do it!' and the sequence proved the old man right.

"Stables had long been over, the gun had boomed out its daily evening salute to the Stars and Stripes as they were hauled down, the men were coming out from supper ready for amusement, now that all duty for the day was over. Long lines of them could be seen hurrying down the broad walk that led from the adjutant's office to the post trader's. About two hundred yards outside the garrison a narrow walk branched off the main one towards the little gray stone chapel, where once a month a kindly white-haired old Jesuit came up from Standing Rock Agency Mission to minister to his little flock of 'regulars.'

"On this particular Saturday night Maloney had started for the post trader's. He had a whole month's pay in his pocket; he hadn't touched a drop in six weeks, but this

evening he meant to relax just a bit. But alas! the few drinks he had had before supper had unmistakably gone to his feet, which instead of carrying him to his destination, brought him in a wavering and unsteady fashion to the chapel door before the old fellow noticed his change of direction.

"It was quite dark now, and the chapel itself was unlighted save by the tiny red flame from the altar lamp. One door was partly open, so Maloney had a view of the interior; the chapel seemed empty, and, obeying a sudden impulse, the old soldier, half dazed between the bitter cold and the post trader's vile whiskey, stumbled in. As he reached the threshold a wonderful vision appeared to him:

"Standing beneath the altar lamp so that its rose-colored flame cast a soft glow over the whole figure, was the Madonna—not the careworn, suffering 'Lady of Sorrows,' but the youthful Virgin in a robe of trailing white. A long mantle of pale blue fell from her shoulder; on the beautiful golden hair rested a crown of exquisite white roses. Both arms were outstretched; in one hand she held a great bunch of the same white roses, and the

other hand clasped a white rosary, while at her feet several of the roses had fallen and were resting there.

"Not for one instant did Maloney doubt the reality of his vision. With a smothered cry of shame and reverence he went forward a few steps and fell on his knees.

"'Oh, Blissed Virgin, have you come to warn an' save me?' he cried. 'Ye know, don't ye, Mother Mary, that no matter phwat I've done nor how bad I've been, I've always said me beads? Is it the plidge ye'd have me take? Well thin, an' I will.

"'So hilp me God an' our Blissed Lady, niver will I take a dhrap of intoxicatin' liquor so long as I may live!' he said fervently.

"The old soldier's voice fairly trembled with emotion.

"As he ended his vow the heavenly vision stooped forward and placed in his shaking hands a tiny bow of blue ribbon and a long-stemmed rose.

"'God have mercy on me a sinner!' cried the old fellow, and quite overcome he buried his face in his hands and began almost mechanically to repeat the prayer he had learned at his mother's knee in the 'ould counthry.' "Presently he opened his eyes, but the vision had vanished and in its place stood the priest. 'Father, will you confess a sinner—wan as hasn't been to his duty this twinty years?'

"'Come, my son,' replied the priest gently.

"And from that evening Maloney was a reformed man, and all 'B' troop marvelled at it; and none knew save Maloney, the priest, and Miss Sands, the colonel's niece.

"When the big box of roses had arrived from Omaha that evening, with Lieutenant Jack Hollingsworth's card, Honoria was dressed for the hop; it was late, and it wouldn't do to keep Jack waiting, still, if she hurried she would have time to run over to the chapel, share her lovely flowers with Our Lord and our Blessed Lady, and say a decade of the beads, too.

"She had twisted a few long-stemmed roses into a crown for Our Lady's statue, and then in an innocent girlish whim had placed them on her own golden locks as she ran lightly over to the silent, empty little chapel. And thus it was that Maloney had his vision of the Madonna. It was not until

nearly a year later that the old soldier knew the truth in regard to his vision.

- "'Well, Father, sure 'twas Our Lady annyways as sint Miss Honoria to save me; and God helpin' me, I'll keep me plidge jist the same.' And he did.
- "A year's absolute soberness won the old soldier his 'stripes,' and the five yellow service-bars for his twenty-five years' active duty looked very gay indeed beneath his sergeant's chevrons.
- "Not many weeks after Maloney had received his well-merited promotion, news reached us that the Cheyennes were on the war-path and were at their usual work of stealing cattle and murdering and scalping the helpless settlers.
- "And one dull gray November day a courier riding at breakneck speed dashed into Steel with orders for the Twelfth to take the field at once. Such was the discipline in the dear old regiment that by noon we were off, having bade a hasty good-by to our sweethearts and wives. Even in the hurry of leaving I had managed a five minutes' talk with a certain young lady, who had promised

to fight on my side this time, as I had jok-

ingly prophesied many years before.

"Old Maloney had evidently not been blind all these months to the way things had been going between this young lady and me, so just before the assembly sounded the old fellow went over to the colonel's quarters and asked to see Miss Honey, as he, like the old home servants, called the young lady.

"She came out at once, and I followed her on the porch just in time to hear the old fellow say: 'Miss Honey, I wanted to thank you once more for all you've done fer me; and I'd like to say good-by, and shake hands with you if you won't think me too bold, Miss.'

"The young lady, with the tears streaming down her face, shook the old fellow warmly by both hands, saying, 'Indeed I will, Sergeant Maloney, and I must tell you how proud I am of those,' pointing to the brannew chevrons that adorned his old field-blouse.

"'An' God bliss you fer it, Miss; an' if at anny toime I can do annything fer you or yours, I'll be there!' . . .

"That was a long and bitter campaign, that winter of '68; both troops and Indians suffered fearfully. It was not until early spring that the last refractory band was hunted down, captured, and returned to the reservation.

"It was the last of March; they had had a pretty lively skirmish that day, but the Indians had been utterly routed; or so the captain in command of the small detachment sent out to fill the water wagons thought. But just as the last trooper made his way slowly and cautiously into the deep canon at the foot of which boiled the small deep mountain river from which they were to get their water, a sudden and fierce fire was poured in upon them from the apparently inaccessible sides of the canon.

"At the first volley Lieutenant Hollings-worth dropped his sabre, and with a groan fell heavily from his horse. Already the buglers were sounding the retreat, but one old gray-haired sergeant paid no heed to their shrill persistent commands; putting his big roan at a run he dashed down the steep ravine, reached the wounded officer, and had him safely in his saddle and had started back before half the command saw what he was about.

"He would have accomplished his gallant rescue in safety, but a bullet through the heart sent the big roan to instant death. His rider reeled, and both he and the wounded officer were thrown to the ground. Maloney had been a giant in his young days, but the dissipation of years had done its work upon his once cast-iron physique.

"With a muttered imprecation against thim red divils' he stopped, and with tender care lifted the wounded officer across his right shoulder and carried his heavy weight as if he had been a baby.

"'Sergeant, put me down,' I gasped, 'you can't do it, man; save yourself.'

"'Don't make me waste me brith wid talkin', Liftenant,' he replied shortly, disrespectful for the first time in all his life to his superior officer. Just then I lost consciousness from loss of blood, but learned from others what occurred.

"Two troopers had started back to our assistance. Maloney had carried me two-thirds of the way up the cañon, amid a perfect storm of bullets, but so far he had escaped them, when suddenly they saw his right arm, which was supporting me, drop again. The

brave old fellow stopped and tenderly shifted me, his still unconscious burden, to his left shoulder, and struggled on. The foremost trooper had just reached him when the fatal bullet struck him.

"'The liftenant first, Pat,' whispered the old soldier faintly.

"'Shut up!' growled the young cavalryman fiercely; he had a lump in his throat so big he couldn't swallow, and his eyes were wet with something that he had not felt since, a home-sick raw recruit, he had read his mother's first letter from home.

"In a second the wounded men were carefully swung up before their rescuers, and their horses, maddened with fright, dashed safely up the rocky trail to where the remainder of the detachment had taken refuge behind a natural trench of rock and scrub oaks.

"'He won't live an hour, sir,' reported the young surgeon, who had just now seen his first 'active service'—indicating with a gesture the sergeant's grim, gray old figure.

"There was no priest to help in the passing of that brave old soul, but Tim Dooley, the dandy little trumpeter of 'B' troop, who was young enough not to have forgotten how

to serve Mass, said the prayers for the dying, while many a rough old trooper said the responses in fervent yet broken tones.

"The last words Maloney said were, 'Tell Miss Honey "I was there." But no one knew what he meant save she to whom I delivered the message some weeks later, when I had been sent in on the sick list to recover from my wounds.

"In the pocket of the sergeant's blouse they found a faded rose and a tiny bow of blue ribbon, together with a medal of the Blessed Virgin.

"'Some romance!' muttered the gruff old captain, who had remembered enough of his youthful Bible knowledge to murmur reverently to the young surgeon, as both officers stood with bared heads by that new-made grave on the lonely prairie:

""Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friend.""

CHAPTER X.

THE HISTORY OF A VOCATION.

THERE was a little silence after the Colonel finished; Mrs. Hollingsworth's eyes were wet, Jack sniffed audibly, and Father Sayre said: "'Because he hath loved, much shall be forgiven him.'

"My story, Jack," he continued, "has no war in it, but it has a fight, which, as you shall hear, decided the vocations of two young Americans, both of whom were very obstinate, self-willed lads.

"My tale begins with the first American pilgrimage to Lourdes, early in the '70's; I was a tall overgrown lad of fourteen, and Cecil, my brother, only a year older.

"My mother had decided to make the pilgrimage partly for her health, and also to receive the blessing of our Holy Father Pius IX. The pilgrims were to carry as a votive offering from the Catholics of the United States a beautiful flag or banner, which we were to take direct to Rome to be blessed by the Pope. Then it was to be carried to Lourdes, and in solemn procession, with chant and incense, hung on the ceiling of the Church of our Lady of Lourdes.

"To my brother Cecil and me had been accorded the honor of escorting and carrying the banner, as we all thought it; for somehow we all, my mother, Cecil, and myself, had conceived the idea that the American offering was some sort of a religious banner.

"It was only the day before we sailed that we were undeceived, and then it was too late for us to decline the honor; we simply could not back out at the last moment, for our names and mission had been heralded far and near.

"We were staying at the Fifth Avenue, and a party of friends who had come up from Baltimore to see us off were dining with us. We were just finishing dinner when the head waiter came and said that a messenger had arrived with a package which he must deliver into my mother's own hands.

"Suspecting that it was the eagerly lookedfor banner, we hurried out and found the messenger awaiting us in our private parlor. Hurriedly undoing the careful wrappings, we found the case in which the banner was packed to be a very handsome affair of mahogany mounted with silver. Quickly unlocking this box, my mother shook out the folds of an exquisite silk *United States flag*.

"As the Stars and Stripes met our startled gaze a strange thrill went through us all, all red-hot Southerners as we were; it seemed a message from God, a message of peace and brotherly love.

"My mother, with a white set face, left the room at once—that her sons should be chosen out of the whole United States to carry that flag, which had brought desolation unspeakable to her and hers!

"You must know, Jack," said Father Sayre, turning to his absorbed little listener, "that my father was killed during the war; I barely remember him myself."

"I am awful sorry for her, and you too, Father," replied Jack softly; "it's an awful interestin' story," he said with a sigh of heartfelt satisfaction.

"My mother is thoroughly 'reconstructed'

now," said the priest smiling; "she really has to be, for she has two sons in the army.

"She did not mention the word 'flag' again, but Cecil and I took the greatest care of it; I think we were both 'reconstructed' on the spot. At the very instant our mother shook out those silken folds we felt it was our flag, the flag we would die for. She has since told us that she felt a positive aversion to the flag until at Lourdes she beheld its stars and stripes waving from the ceiling of the church, the most beautiful of the flags hung there by most of the nations of the earth.

"No unusual or particularly interesting incidents occurred during our voyage. On landing we pilgrims went straight to Rome, where an audience had been arranged for us with the Holy Father, who received us most graciously, made us a little address, and then, as we all knelt, gave us his benediction. After this an officer of the Papal Guard led Cecil and me forward, carrying our colors with us, and we knelt before the throne. Laying his hand on our beautiful flag, Pius IX. solemnly blessed it; then motioning us to stand, he spoke to us in a low impressive voice, in Latin

of course, which one of the chamberlains translated for us. 'The United States is very dear to me,' said the Holy Father. 'I love your land of freedom and its brave people. Serve God and your beloved country bravely and loyally.' Then raising his hand to give us his blessing, he said: 'Go in peace, my young soldiers!' Looking at us with his keen yet saintlike eyes, he concluded with strange prophetic foresight: 'One of you shall serve with the Cross, and the other shall serve with the sword; see to it that you serve faithfully.'

"As these words were translated to us you can imagine how startled we were, for the Holy Father was repeating, in substance, the ancient saying of our family, the quaint old couplet being cut deep in the stone lintel of the great hall doors in our old Maryland home.

"At a little before seven the next morning Cecil and I reached the Vatican, where we were evidently expected, a young priest conducting us to the chapel and telling us what to do. Promptly at seven the Holy Father appeared and began his Mass at once; Cecil and I, though naturally rather nervous, got through without a mistake.

"After the Holy Father was unvested he went back to the altar to make his thanksgiving, and we were told to wait until his return. Being alone we began to talk, and soon got into a hot, angry discussion. I began it by saying, 'The Pope is a good judge, ain't he, Cec? He knew you were cut out for a priest the moment he saw your pious old mug, and he knew that my six feet were meant for a soldier.'

"'You are mistaken, Tommy,' replied my brother; 'I mean to be the soldier, so you will have to be the priest.'

"'Pooh, I like that! a fine soldier you'll make. Why, I'm half a head taller now, and can lick the stuffing out of you."

"'I know you're taller, but you can't lick me. Just you dare try it,' he answered.

"'Don't you "dare" me, or you'll be sorry for it; priests can't fight,' said I.

"'I'm not a priest and never will be one; you're afraid to fight me.'

"And in another instant we were pummelling each other in good earnest, both so angry that we did not notice the Pope's approach until we heard his mild voice saying something. Remembering where we were and dreadfully ashamed of ourselves, we stood there utterly abashed.

"There was actually a twinkle in the Holy Father's eye as he inquired into the cause of our hostilities. I was speechless, but Cecil managed to blurt out the cause of our disagreement. When the young priest had translated Cecil's answer to the Pope, he smiled gently; then a look of great gravity stole over his face and he laid his hand on my head saying: 'You, my son, will be the soldier of the cross; you are called.' As the attendant priest translated the Holy Father's words a feeling of deep awe stole over me, and I scarcely heard his message to Cecil to draw his sword only in the cause of truth and justice.

"A sense of deep peace seemed to pervade my soul, and without a word to any one I went back into the chapel and knelt, absorbed in thought, for over an hour. When I left I had, with God's help, decided upon my vocation."

"That's a fine story! and thank you very much," said Jack. "Which would have licked, you or your brother, if the Pope hadn't interrupted?"

A hearty laugh greeted Jack's question, and when it had subsided Mrs. Hollingsworth rang for Nora to put the young man to bed. "It's 'way past your usual time," said his mamma; so for once Master Jack said good-night and went off without a grumble.

CHAPTER XI.

AN INDIAN FOURTH OF JULY.

Every one was delighted with Father Sayre's idea, for even Jack had never seen an Indian celebration of the national holiday. So early Saturday morning not long after reveille had sounded, the big yellow "dougherty" wagon, with four fine gray mules, and Running Horse as teamster, drove up with a great flourish and clatter in front of the Colonel's quarters, where the party for the reservation was trying to breakfast, interrupted and hurried up as they were by the two children, who were wildly impatient to be off.

Colonel Hollingsworth had declined to go, fearing Yellow Bird might make his appearance to receive his answer from the "Great Father in Washington," and as no answer had as yet been received, the Colonel thought it best to be on hand to explain matters to the

old chief and induce him to return peaceably to the reservation.

"You may as well go with us, daddy," cried Jack, rushing into the dining-room for the dozenth time to see if the grown-up people were not yet finished. "Running Horse says Yellow Bird won't be here until tomorrow; it's just essackerly full moon tomorrow."

"Your oracle, Jack, will no doubt prove right, for certainly Indians do know to a minute the changes of the moon; still, I shall be on the safe side. And to tell you the truth, I am not particularly anxious for a thirtymile drive this hot July day, to see an Indian dance. So hurry off, good people, and get a start before the sun gets too high."

Mrs. Hollingsworth and Mrs. Douglass occupied the back seat of the ambulance, Marion Worden with Dee and Jack the middle seat. Mr. Belden on Major was to do escort duty, leaving the extra seat by the driver for Father Sayre, who had promised to return with them.

The great Sioux or "Dakotah" Nation—the latter being their proper Indian designation—is divided and subdivided into a num-

ber of smaller tribes, each tribe bearing a distinctive name and speaking its own peculiar dialect; this, however, differs so slightly that all the tribes can understand one another's spoken language.

The "Standing Rock" Agency, to visit which Father Sayre had invited his friends from Fort Fetterman, was occupied by Red Eagle and his tribe, among the most civilized of the Sioux. The reservation was large and fertile; the Indians owned cattle, sheep, and horses, and cultivated corn and oats to some extent.

The government builds for each family a nice little frame house, but these children of nature much prefer their own tepees, and set them up right alongside of their houses, and live in them, too, summer and winter, unless the thermometer drops very much below zero. The houses given them by Uncle Sam are considered as purely ornamental.

At Standing Rock are two large Catholic schools in charge of the Sisters. Here the children are taught not only the three "R's," but useful trades as well. And they are very patriotic little Americans, celebrating Decoration Day and Fourth of July quite as

energetically as their white brothers and sisters.

Fourth of July is a particularly great day with them, for by permission of their agent they hold a big annual camp, have a grand feast, and conclude the ceremonies of the day with a war-dance in full war-paint and feathers, having in fact a regular *Indian* good time!

To this yearly camp the Standing Rock Indians are allowed to invite their friends in the neighboring tribes. Many of the peculiarly *Indian* features of the day's celebration the good Sisters did not approve of, but they had to go very slowly and cautiously about their work of civilizing and Christianizing these wild children of the plains.

As the party from the fort drove down the steep and winding road at the foot of which lay the agency buildings, the sound of martial music reached them, and they discovered just ahead of them a Studebaker farm-wagon occupied by an Indian band dressed in blankets, paint, feathers, and all tooting away for dear life at "Yankee Doodle." It was a funny sight—the Indian toggery and the very American vehicle and tune. As soon as they saw the ambulance and caught sight of Lieutenant

Belden they changed their tune to the "Star Spangled Banner," evidently as a compliment to the army people.

Mr. Belden uncovered, and Jack waved his cap at them, shouting hurrah! while Dee in her excitement grasped the linen lap-robe and waved it at them.

As the big four-mule ambulance flew past them, Running Horse exchanged greetings with them, and announced to Lieutenant Belden that they were "Santees" who had ridden over a hundred miles to help celebrate the day. "They say they passed Yellow Bird and forty of his young bucks on the fort trail."

The party from the post drove directly to the girls' school, where Father Sayre was waiting to meet them and take them over to the Indian encampment. Some of the teachers from the government schools on the reservation joined them, delighted beyond measure to be with ladies and gentlemen if only for a day; a number of these teachers were Eastern girls, young, pretty, and cultivated, who found their work among the Indians very hard and unsatisfactory, lacking, as they did, the motive that induced and enabled the Sis-

ters to undergo cheerfully all the hardships and disappointments.

The camp was a huge affair, covering four sides of a great grassy plain at the summit of the bluff which sloped gradually away from the banks of the "Big Muddy," as the Indians call the Missouri River.

There were over two thousand Indians congregated there, from the old squaws and bucks too feeble to do more than look on at the fun, to the little pappooses strapped on their mothers' backs; no one had been left behind. The tents were decorated with flags and green willow branches which the young Indians brought up from the river banks. Their ponies, too, were festooned with the same graceful foliage, tied in great bunches to the animals' manes and tails, and allowed to trail for some distance on the ground.

The ponies as well as their riders were plentifully besmeared with war-paint, and both together presented a very startling appearance as they dashed to and fro, each young buck doing his best to show off; for they are as vain as peacocks about their fine riding, going always on a dead run, showing no mercy to their willing little ponies.

While the squaws were busy preparing the feast for the day, the Indian men, old and young, gave a very interesting exhibition for the army people. They formed a long line of horsemen, and to the sound of Indian music (?) went through many difficult and pretty evolutions: The young bucks would throw their hats—those few who wore any—on the ground, then pick them up without dismounting, with their ponies on a dead run. Then they would dash by, and, holding on by their fingers and toes, throw themselves almost beneath their ponies' bodies, giving wild, blood-curdling war-whoops.

The music consisted of an orchestra and chorus. The former was composed of half a dozen venerable gray-haired bucks seated in a circle, beating big "tom-toms" or Indian drums. As many others had big metal clappers, which greatly pleased Jack and Dee on account of the loud din they made. The chorus consisted of all the available old squaws, who chanted a sort of rhythmic "Ugh-ugh! Ugh-ugh-ugh!"

Finally the banquet was ready, and such a feast as it was! There was only one course, but as there was plenty of it, it was all the

guests required: Hot boiled beef that had been first cut into long thin strips and partly dried in the sun, and a flat cake made of flour and lard and fried brown in a skillet, were the substantials in the ménu, although dog stew was also served; for though the Indians prefer beef when they can get it, yet "dog" in some form or other is a necessary portion of a genuine Indian powwow or feast.

Every man and boy took a seat, while the women and girls meekly waited upon them. Mr. Belden and Jack were invited to take seats, but declined on the plea that they had already promised to dine with the Sisters.

It was the funniest sight imaginable to see those poor squaws that broiling hot July day, enveloped in the inevitable blanket, each carrying in one hand a pan of stew for her particular lord, with a bright red satin parasol poised carefully in the other.

Seeing the irrepressible smiles of the garrison ladies, one of the young teachers laughingly explained it. She said there were two articles the Indian women considered as a sort of badge of civilization; the parasol was one. "And now," she continued, "just take a peep into all these open tepees and you will

see a bran-new trunk. They never use them for anything; they are as much of an ornament as a bouquet of wax flowers in a glass case. When our young men go a-wooing they present the maiden with a trunk or a parasol, and such a gift usually wins."

As the ladies went from tent to tent they noticed that on their approach the young Indian girls hid or hurried off out of sight.

"They have the grace to feel ashamed of being seen here, for we begged them not to come," said Miss Graves, the teacher, "and I see only a few have minded. As for the boys, they are beyond our control entirely. They are all *Indian* to-day, and not a bit ashamed of it either."

"Yes, there's a sample of it, too," laughed Mr. Belden, as a blanketed, painted young buck dashed by them yelling wildly. "Jack, that's your civilized friend Running Horse; he's forgotten he was ever white. I only hope his attack won't last too long, for we must get back to-night; I am officer of the guard to-morrow."

Before long, much to Mrs. Hollingsworth's horror, Jack was seen hanging on to Running Horse's pommel, dashing by, yelling like a small Indian, his yellow curls standing out

straight in the breeze. Mrs. Hollingsworth sent Mr. Belden to capture the small runaway, and hurried the whole party back to the agency for dinner.

They drove home in the cool of the evening, Jack and Dee so tired they slept most of the way back. Dee just roused herself sufficiently when they reached home to say "Good-night, and I wish you a happy birthday to-morrow, Jack."

"Be up in time to serve my first Mass, youngster," said Father Sayre as he carried the tired little fellow up to his room.

"I will, sure!" murmured Jack sleepily.

CHAPTER XII.

A HOSTAGE OF WAR.

JACK's eighth birthday dawned bright and warm; he was up before the flag, enjoying his numerous gifts which he found on the table by his side.

Dick, who played half-back on the "West Points," had sent him a football and costume complete, padded duck trousers, jacket, and all the other belongings. Billy's contribution was a suit of real sailor clothes made by the ship's tailor; the trousers were long and had a true nautical cut that delighted Jack's heart. He couldn't decide which to wear, the football outfit or sailor suit, until he remembered that he was to serve Father Sayre's first Mass and that neither of them would be exactly suitable. His mother had given him a small silver watch, his father a handsome riding-whip, and Mr. Belden a fishing-rod;

Dee had worked him half a dozen pretty handkerchiefs, and Father Sayre's gift was a substantial boy's vest-pocket manual, just the thing for the eager little altar-boy.

"This is just a splendiferous birthday!" ejaculated the small man as he splashed in and out of his bath and hurried into his clothes so as to run and get his mother's eight birthday kisses and the same number of thumps from his father, with a good hard one at the finish to "grow on."

The band was just "sounding off" at guard mounting, playing "Onward, Christian Soldiers," as a lively quick-step, when the spruce-looking young orderly called out softly to Jack: "Say, Yellow Bird and his young men are coming down the agency trail—see?"

Jack's sharp eyes spied them at once, and he rushed into the den to call his father.

Half an hour later the old chief, looking very solemn indeed, drew up in front of the Colonel's quarters; he was accompanied by the interpreter, Quick Elk, and his small son Little Horn.

As the Indians dismounted the Colonel advanced to meet them with outstretched hand;

but Jack was before him, crying out a delighted "Hello, Little Horn! I'm awful glad to see you. You're just in time for my birthday party and Fourth-of-July celebration tomorrow."

The Colonel and Yellow Bird exchanged silent greetings, then the Colonel hastened to explain to the old chief that he had as yet received no answer from the Great Father in Washington in regard to his request for the dismissal of the agent Jenkins. Yellow Bird listened in grave silence, but the explanation was not satisfactory, for he pointed to the party of young bucks who were watching for the result of the conference; they had not dismounted, but were drawn up in line awaiting the verdict of their chief.

"My young men have been patient; it was easy for them to kill the bad agent, but I have begged them to wait until the Great Father heard our wish. But now he has forgotten us, and I will take my people away to a land of health."

All this the interpreter translated rapidly as Yellow Bird talked.

"Ask him to stay a few days and give the Great Father more time to answer. I will

send the lightning telegraph to hurry them up."

But the old chief was angry, sullen, and suspicious. His only reply was: "I have done as I said, waited until the full moon came, and now I will stay no longer. I thank you, my brother, for all that you have done, but I cannot stay; my people look to me for help, and I must go to them. I have brought a token to Little Coyote;" and Yellow Bird beckoned to one of his men, who rode up with a pretty little bay pony, the very counterpart of the one Little Horn was riding. On the pony's back was strapped a buckskin suit—cap, jacket, and trousers—exactly like the one the little Indian wore.

Jack was hugely delighted with his present and immediately carried it off, donning his newest suit and thinking himself a pretty lucky fellow to get a football suit, a sailor suit, and an Indian outfit all in one day.

Yellow Bird refused the Colonel's invitation to stay over night, but said he would leave at dusk; he was rather sullen and would make no promises. Still, the Colonel believed that he would remain on the reservation a

few days longer to see whether the President's message would not be a favorable one.

Mrs. Hollingsworth was not at home, but Jack received permission from his father to stay with the Indians until dusk, when they meant to leave.

"Tattoo," Jack's bedtime, sounded promptly at nine o'clock, but Jack did not appear. Colonel and Mrs. Hollingsworth were sitting on the front porch watching the full moon like a great red globe come up slowly over the summit of the distant divide.

"Where can that boy be?" wondered Mrs. Hollingsworth.

"Oh, seeing his Indian friends off," returned the Colonel easily; the night was hot and he wanted to enjoy his cigar in peace.

"I do wish he would come! I thought you said, Colonel, the Indians were to leave early."

"Well, Yellow Bird did say so; but, my dear, don't worry over that chick of yours. What possible harm can come to the child?"

Mrs. Hollingsworth sat in silence for about fifteen minutes and then announced that she meant to stroll down the "line" and look up the little truant.

Just then the orderly appeared, to report before being sent off for the night, so the Colonel sent him over to where the Indians had camped for the day, with orders to bring Master Jack straight home. The orderly soon returned, saying that Jack was nowhere to be seen and that the Indians had left at dusk, as the chief had said he would.

Mrs. Hollingsworth had not returned, so leaving word with the servants that he had gone out to find Jack, the Colonel started the orderly in one direction with orders to inquire for the child at every house down the line, while he himself went the opposite way.

An hour's thorough search failed to produce the little boy or any trace of him. Mrs. Hollingsworth was in an agony of terror by this time, and the Colonel was far more uneasy than he would admit even to himself. Every officer down the line had now joined in the search, but at midnight they determined to arouse the sleeping men and organize search parties.

Father Sayre and Mr. Belden had been indefatigable in suggesting and searching. Suddenly a thought seemed to strike Father Sayre. "Could Yellow Bird have carried the child off, Mr. Belden?" asked the priest.

Mr. Belden's face lighted up with renewed hope at this suggestion, for all night he had seen, whenever he closed his eyes, Jack's helpless little form swept down the deep swift Buffalo.

The Colonel also grasped eagerly at this idea, and the sentries who had been on duty by the corral through which the Indians must have passed on their way out were closely questioned; but they soon dispelled any hope he might have had. Indeed, the officer of the guard himself had seen the Indians depart; there were Yellow Bird, his son Little Horn, who had turned and waved his red handker-chief as the party rode out through the gates, and only about a dozen bucks. Both sentries said the same thing; the officer of the guard had been making his rounds just at that time, so all three had seen Yellow Bird's departure.

The Colonel and Mr. Belden reluctantly abandoned this hope, but Father Sayre deep down in his heart had an obstinate conviction that he was on the right track.

If the priest could have peeped into Run-

ning Horse's most commodious tepee, he would have been more convinced than ever of the truth of his surmise; for curled up beside the half-breed teamster's newest pappoose lay a small Indian lad who looked remarkably like Little Horn, whom Lieutenant Bellew, the officer of the guard, had been certain that he had waved an adieu to some hours ago.

Mrs. Hollingsworth's heart-breaking agony was sad to witness, but towards morning she slept the sleep of utter exhaustion.

With daybreak a systematic search was begun; the swift and treacherous Buffalo was dragged and redragged, and Mr. Belden's heart felt lighter, for his constant horror had been that it might contain Jack's body. The wide treeless prairie was searched for miles around the post, but with no results; there was absolutely no trace of the lost child.

Mrs. Hollingsworth was now half crazed with suspense and anguish, and the Colonel's fine ruddy face had lost all its color; he looked and walked like an old man.

"Dr. Brown, if she could only cry! She will lose her mind if you don't do something for her," cried poor Marion, the tears flowing down her own cheeks as she spoke. "Father

Sayre is the only one who can get her to speak even, and all she says is 'Pray! pray! it is not too late to pray, is it? He is not dead yet?' Oh, Jack! my dear little Jack, where are you?" cried the young girl, break-

ing down completely.

"This will never do, Marion," cried the good doctor in dismay. "I depend upon you to help me. I am going to try a new plan; I am going to bring Louise over here without saying a word beforehand to Mrs. Hollingsworth—just simply put my little cripple in her lap and have the child ask for Jack. I think the loving question will break down that stony barrier and enable the poor mother to weep." And here the wise old doctor blew his nose violently and looked severely at Marion, as though he suspected that she might think he was crying.

"It will be the very thing, doctor!" cried the girl hopefully. "Dear little Louise,

whom Jack rescued so bravely!"

"I shall have to leave her here some little time, Marion; I have a sick-call over at the corral. That half-breed teamster met with an accident some time in the night—thrown from his horse, I fancy, and injured his brain; he is delirious. What he could have been doing on his horse at midnight puzzles me; no good, I fancy. And that squaw of his is as mum as an oyster, though she looks frightened to death every time I go in their tepee. She acts as if she had some tremendous secret."

"She couldn't know anything about Jack, could she?" began Marion doubtfully.

"No, no; how could she? Her secret no doubt is some scrape that ne'er-do-well husband of hers is in. She is welcome to keep it, poor thing!" and the doctor hurried off to bring little Louise.

And yet they were so near the secret of Jack's disappearance, right then—if they had only known!

Mr. Belden was the next to appear on the scene. "Where is Dr. Brown?" he asked.

"Gone to bring little Louise over to see if she cannot comfort that poor heart-broken mother and make her cry."

"You look utterly worn out yourself, Marion;" the name slipped out unnoticed by either of them.

"I feel heart-broken," she said with a little sob.

"Let me try and comfort you, Marion. I love you, dear, and would like to help."

"It seems so selfish to be thinking of ourselves now. Wait, wait until Jack is found; they need me now I know," and the young girl hurried off.

"Marion is right; I can wait, and wait hopefully for my dear girl;" and the young officer hastened off to get a mouthful to eat before starting out on another long search. He had been in the saddle without food or rest since daybreak.

Dr. Brown's plan proved eminently successful. When Mrs. Hollingsworth felt the child's loving arms around her and heard Louise's plaintive little voice ask, "Where is my Jack?" the tears gushed forth and she wept unrestrainedly, and fell asleep at last with the little girl folded in her arms.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RETURN OF THE HOSTAGE.

THE Colonel coming in from a fruitless allnight search paused for a moment on the rose-covered porch, looking out with unseeing eyes as the first hint of sunrise tinged the distant foot-hills a faint rose. He was deathly tired, and had lost hope of ever seeing his child again. With a groan he turned to enter the great silent house, when his tired footsteps stumbled a little and there, right on the door-step, was a piece of brown paper, folded into the cocked-hat shape on which the details for the officers on guard, and the countersigns, are made out. Jack had spent several days in perfecting himself in the art of folding them. It was addressed simply "For Daddy," but at the sight of these boyish pot-hooks the Colonel's heart almost stopped beating. With a great sob he

snatched the paper to his lips, saying: "Thank God! thank God!"

"Dere Daddy," the familiar scrawl read, "i am safe and well and having a bully time at yeller berd's camp; but i can not tell you whair I am, for i hav promised not to cause i am a Hostiage of War like that little feller my 'grate-grate' as I call him, that Dolly told me abot. i hop you did not werry abot me, for yellow bird said he wud send you wird rite away that i was saf with him. We had a dandy 4th little horn and me had plenty of firecrackers praps you notist thair wus one big bundel missin' out of the hall.

"yeller berd is not to blaim, it was my seggestern (i cant spell this wurd jest rite) that

I wud be a hostiage.

"so no more from yure Affecshunnate son, "JACK."

"I don't understand it a bit," exclaimed the puzzled Colonel, "but oh! thank God for the blessed knowledge that the child lives and is well." And he ran up the stairs like a boy of twenty, shouting at the top of his voice, "Jack is found! Jack is found!"

Instantly the whole house was in a state of excitement. The servants came running in to hear the good news, while Mrs. Hollings-

worth, with Louise in her arms, sobbed out her joy and relief on the Colonel's shoulder. But when they had all quieted down a bit it was discovered that after all Jack wasn't exactly found; they knew with whom he was, but where he was they knew no more than before.

Then it puzzled them how the letter from Jack could have been delivered. Dr. Brown might have thrown a little light upon the subject if he had so wished, but he told no one of his suspicions save Father Sayre.

The doctor had been sent for in haste to see the teamster Running Horse, who had had a relapse and was again violently delirious.

"Your husband has been out of bed, out of doors," the doctor had said sternly to the poor frightened squaw; but he could get nothing out of her. However, by dint of questioning the sentries the doctor discovered, just as he had half suspected, that the half-breed had been seen over near the officers' line; in fact, the sentry on Number Two, whose post began and ended immediately in the rear of the Colonel's quarters, admitted

that he had challenged Running Horse twice. But wishing to raise no false hopes, the doctor consulted only with Father Sayre.

"We shan't hear from Jack again for several days," said the doctor, "if Running Horse is the messenger, for the man is really very ill."

But the doctor was mistaken, for two days later another characteristic epistle was received from the young man. This was addressed "For Mamma," and began:

"Derest Dolly, don't werry abot me I am

well and am havin a splendiferus time.

"My shurt is orful dirty and my trowsers and my stockings is all wore out; I say my prars evry nite but I can't bresh my teeth.

"When the nite cums i am orful lonely and I miss Dee and my little lame girl tell daddy to have the president get a move on him i don't like bein a hostiage so long, so no more from yure luving

"JACK."

A few quiet questions put to Appolyn and Nora brought out the fact that Running Horse's squaw had been at the Colonel's very early that morning for beef broth; she had come so early that Jerry had found her sitting on the kitchen steps when he had come to start the fire a half hour before reveille.

All search for Jack had been stopped, for the Colonel felt, and even Mrs. Hollingsworth, though terribly anxious, agreed with him, that the child was perfectly safe from all harm while with his Indian friends. The best and quickest way to get Jack home was to rid the Indians of their bad, dishonest agent; so the very hour that the first letter from the poor little "hostage" had been received the Colonel sent off a long personal telegram to the Secretary of War by courier, for the nearest telegraph station was twenty-five miles away, at O'Neil, a little way-station of the Sioux City Central.

* * * * *

It was a piping hot July day in Washington; so hot that the secretary to the President had betaken himself, with his afterbreakfast cigar and the morning paper, for a cool leisurely half hour on the wide shaded rear veranda. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation of surprise: "Hullo! what's this?" as the big headlines stared him in the face:

- "LITTLE JACK, SON OF COLONEL HOLLINGS-WORTH, CARRIED OFF BY INDIANS.
- "CHIEF YELLOW BIRD DECLARES THAT HE WILL NEVER GIVE UP THE BOY UNTIL AGENT JENKINS IS DISMISSED.
- "Soldiers and Settlers Aroused over the daring Kidnapping."

"Why, this must be my friend Jack who wrote the President such a 'frendly' letter, asking to have this same man Jenkins sent off." And quite excited, the young secretary hurried into the President's private office to tell him of Jack's capture.

The President was quite as interested as his secretary, and the consequence was that several rather hot telegrams passed between Washington, Fort Fetterman, and Buffalo Agency; the outcome of these was an order from the War Department relieving the agent, Jenkins, and placing the reservation under military control, a second lieutenant of cavalry and a detail of twenty men to take station at the agency until further orders.

Following this came a telegram from the department commander authorizing the Colonel to turn out his whole command with

ten days' rations to search for John Quincy Hollingsworth, junior.

In the meantime Dr. Brown and Father Sayre had discussed matters. "There is no doubt in my mind, Father, that Running Horse is the medium of communication between the Indians and Jack. Nothing would induce him to betray their hiding-place, I know well, for that band belongs to his own particular tribe. Running Horse delivered that first letter of Jack's himself; then when he was too ill to take the second one he sent his squaw.

"Now undoubtedly the plan was for Running Horse to notify Yellow Bird just as soon as the agent was dismissed, and Jack would be brought back to the post at once; but this illness of Running Horse must have upset all their plans. Yellow Bird doesn't dare send his messengers right into the post, so he does not know of the teamster's illness, and most likely is wondering why on earth Running Horse doesn't keep up communication with him.

"There is just one way to do, Father; the teamster is conscious now, but very weak, and if I mistake not, very repentant for having

meddled with Yellow Bird's quarrel. You go right over to his tepee and tax him with knowing Jack's whereabouts. If he gives in and admits it, have him send that squaw of his to meet the chief's messenger with the notice of Jenkins' dismissal. And I am very much mistaken if Master Jack doesn't come riding in, in a day or so, with his Indian friends."

"The little monkey, it's he who deserves to be well punished for the terrible fright he has given us all. The Indians would never have thought of such a thing as a 'hostiage,' as Jack spells it."

How Father Sayre managed it no one ever quite knew, but it was just as Dr. Brown had suspected: Running Horse had been an accomplice in the child's kidnapping, though he assured the doctor that he would never have permitted even his chief to carry off Jack unless the boy himself had been willing. And Father Sayre and Dr. Brown believed him.

Running Horse had met with the accident which had disabled him and disarranged all their plans, as he was returning from a midnight sally spent in getting Little Horn safely out of the post.

Yellow Bird had meant to have Jack in daily communication with his father, so that his parents would not worry over him; for the old chief was sincerely grateful to both the Colonel and his wife for the many kindnesses they had done him. He had set apart four of his young men, the best riders in his camp, as couriers; but when Running Horse had failed to meet them the Indians were at a loss to know what to do, being afraid to venture inside the post to find out what had happened to the half-breed.

At first Running Horse absolutely refused to communicate Yellow Bird's hiding-place even to the priest; but on Father Sayre's representing to him that the troops would be sent out against the Indians and a war would inevitably follow, the poor fellow himself consented to divulge the secret to the priest on three conditions: That Father Sayre should never tell the hiding-place to any one; that he should go in person to tell the chief; that Yellow Bird and his band and he—Running Horse—should be forgiven for what they had done. The priest was willing to accept them, and Colonel Hollingsworth readily consented to all three conditions, for he agreed with Dr.

Brown that Master Jack was the real culprit in the whole affair.

Father Sayre set out alone, riding Mr. Belden's Major. No one knew or even guessed his errand save those who were in the secret; they did not tell Mrs. Hollingsworth, for fear of a disappointment for her.

The second day after his departure, just as the band was forming for guard mounting, the sentry on Number Six, over by the corral, called for the corporal of the guard and reported that a party of Indians was coming down the old and mostly unused trail by the creek. By the time the officer of the guard was notified the Indians had approached near enough to be plainly recognizable with the aid of a field-glass. The Colonel and every officer in the post came on a run.

"Yes, it's Yellow Bird; I see him," said Mr. Belden, who was using the glass. There was a moment's intense silence; they were awaiting his next words with painful anxiety:

"Yes, thank God! I see Father Sayre and our Jack."

Such a shout of joy and relief went up!

"Well, it's the queerest kind of a procession; here, sir, look yourself," said Mr. Bel-

den, laughing and handing the glass to the Colonel.

Some little bird must have carried the good news, for just at this moment Mrs. Hollingsworth arrived, with little Louise hopping along on her crutch by her side as usual. And following them came all the women and children, Dee so excited that her mother had to hold her with both hands.

By this time the queer-looking procession had come near enough to be seen with the naked eye, and then the smiles and laughter became audible, though some of the tenderhearted women were crying softly, knowing what terrible anxiety Colonel and Mrs. Hollingsworth had suffered. Yellow Bird in full war regalia, which consisted of an old cavalry dress-coat and helmet, on top of which rested an eagle-feather head-dress-which was his hereditary badge of chieftainshipheaded a force of three hundred young warriors, who in war-paint and feathers looked formidable enough. Their ponies were painted and decorated with pine branches, feathers, and numbers of small flags. In the centre appeared Jack and Father Sayre riding a gorgeously decorated animal, while two

young bucks rode ahead of them carrying a set of old and dilapidated cavalry guidons.

By this time all the enlisted men who were off duty had assembled to greet the wanderer, and cheer after cheer went up, to which the Indians replied with ear-piercing whoops; it was really very exciting.

As the Indians rode through the big gate of the corral, the band, which the adjutant had sent for in hot haste, struck up "When Johnny comes Marching Home Again," the tune they always played whenever the regiment returned from service in the field.

"Here I am, daddy!" cried a tattered, torn, curly-headed figure, in whom it was hard to recognize Jack.

The Colonel lifted the little fellow off his pony, and without a word placed him in his mother's outstretched arms.

* * * *

Orders were given to provide a big feast for the Indians, who felt themselves the heroes of the day; but Mrs. Hollingsworth could not be induced to go near them. She wouldn't see Yellow Bird when he came to pay his respects.

"I've forgiven him," she said, "but I can't

forget those days and nights of horror; he reminds me of what he made me suffer." And the Colonel, seeing how she felt, did not insist.

Jack had to tell his story over and over to an always-admiring audience. Dee in particular insisted upon knowing every detail of "our plan," as she now called it; for had not she and Jack discussed the idea of a hostage? Indeed, seeing what a hero Jack was in every one's eyes, the little girl was half sorry the Indians had not taken her.

Jack said the idea of being a "hostiage," as he insisted upon calling it, suddenly popped into his head while he was taking dinner with Yellow Bird, Little Horn, and Quick Elk the interpreter, the old chief felt so badly because the Great Father had not answered his demand. His people would all starve or die if the Great Father did not hurry and send away the bad agent. Then it was that Jack had conceived his brilliant idea of hurrying up the President by being willingly taken captive.

"I just changed places with Little Horn, who hid in Running Horse's tepee, and I rode right under Mr. Belden's eyes, and waved my handkerchief at him, and he never suspected me."

But to do Jack justice, he felt terribly over the dreadful pain and anxiety his escapade had caused his father and mother. The Indians had promised him he should write home every day, which he had faithfully done, not knowing that only the first two letters had reached them; for Yellow Bird had been really afraid to tell the child of Running Horse's failure to meet the couriers with Jack's letters.

But that night, when Jack lay cuddled up in his mother's loving arms, he confessed to her that playing "hostiage" hadn't been all fun by any means. For about two days he had enjoyed it, but when the days went by without his hearing a word from the post he had become thoroughly frightened; and he had been the happiest boy possible when late one evening, to the dismay of the Indians, Father Sayre had entered the "Happy Valley."

But their dismay and anger had changed to gladness when they learned what news he brought, and then and there they organized the triumphal procession with which to return their small hostage.

"And, daddy," said Jack, "Running Horse did tell the truth about the fish and the lake of hot water and cold; it's all true, every bit of it. I saw it with my own eyes."

"I shall have to see those wonders myself, Jack," returned his father.

But Jack suddenly exclaimed: "Why, daddy, you never can, for when we got near the valley they tied a handkerchief over my eyes so that I couldn't see one mite, and when we came out they did the same way; and Father Sayre has promised not to never tell any one, so no one will ever be able to find the place."

And Jack was right; for though every hunting-party that went out from Fort Fetterman during the next two years searched for the fabled riches of Happy Hunting Valley they searched in vain. It was never found.

The next few days brought a flood of telegrams of inquiry and congratulation. Dick and Billy wired to say that if Jack were not found at once they would both take leave and come home and find him.

Little Louise had not said much, but in

her shy way she hobbled around after her small knight, her face alive with silent adoration.

Among the telegrams received was one from the doctor of a small Western town, saying that Louise's father and mother had been drowned while attempting to ford a stream near by; a letter from Colonel Hollingsworth, recommending the man as honest and deserving, had been found on the body, so they had telegraphed the Colonel.

Colonel and Mrs. Hollingsworth quietly made up their minds to keep Louise and bring her up as one of their own, as an act of thanksgiving to God Who had so mercifully watched over and restored to them their lost child.

A few days later the mail brought Jack the long-delayed answer from the President; it was really a charming letter. It began, "Master John Quincy Hollingsworth, Jr.," then just below it, "My dear Jack." And it wasn't typewritten either, but just the "frendliest" letter possible, in which the President of the United States apologized that the press of public business had caused him to overlook Jack's letter. The President said

he wished to convey his personal thanks to the boy who had done such good service in the cause of truth and justice, and hoped that he might hear from Jack himself a full account of his adventures while with Yellow Bird's band as a Hostage of War.



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